

SACRED HISTORY,
SELECTED FROM
THE SCRIPTURES;
WITH
ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,
PARTICULARLY CALCULATED
TO FACILITATE THE STUDY
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES
IN
SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

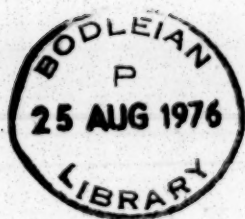
SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.

BY MRS. TRIMMER.

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M.DCC.LXXXVIII.



TO THE
Q U E E N.

M A D A M,

THE following Work was compos'd with
a view to assist young minds in the ac-
quisition of RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE, by re-
moving the difficulties which prevent their
obtaining an early acquaintance with the
HOLY SCRIPTURES. I presume to hope,
that my design will excuse me, both to YOUR
MAJESTY and the world, for the boldness of
the undertaking, and the defects in the per-
formance of it.

The public will not wonder, that I should
be particularly solicitous to obtain the honour

of YOUR ROYAL PATRONAGE, as YOUR MAJESTY is so eminently distinguished for the practice of VIRTUES which are no where perfectly taught but in the SACRED VOLUME.

It is the peculiar felicity of this nation, that every mother may look up to the THRONE for a pattern of the truly maternal character, and behold YOUR MAJESTY instructing YOUR ROYAL PROGENY in the discharge of those duties which lead to IMMORTAL HAPPINESS.

May the influence of Your illustrious example be universally extended! May YOUR MAJESTY long continue to bless this land, and soften the cares of ROYALTY to the best of SOVEREIGNS! And when you shall obtain an incorruptible crown, may it be remembered by posterity, that YOUR MAJESTY added lustre to an earthly one, by
adorning

adorning your mind with the graces of Christianity, and diffusing happiness to all around you!

I am, MADAM,

With all humility and gratitude,

YOUR MAJESTY'S

Most dutiful, and most devoted Servant,

SARAH TRIMMER.

Brentford, Jan. 1, 1788.

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P R E F A C E.

IT was not without great diffidence and apprehension, that I published the first edition of this work. I now, with gratitude, acknowledge, that the utmost candour has been shewn to my labours; and rejoice in the idea, of having been allowed to contribute, in some degree, towards rendering the study of the Scriptures, a regular branch of education.

The opposite customs which have, of late years, prevailed in many schools and families, of either suffering the Scriptures to be read by children in a *promiscuous manner*, or *totally neglected*, have, I am persuaded, been the principal causes of the *profaneness* and *libertinism* of the age; for (as an excellent author observes*) “ as soon as we lay aside the Sacred Writings, which are the only infallible guide of *faith* and *practice*, we must of necessity go wrong.—Our all-wise CREATOR would not have given them to us; if He had not known that we had need of their assistance;” and, therefore, it is presumptuous to suppose, we can educate youth properly without them; and it

* See Preface to Ostervald's Arguments.

may justly be considered as an irreverent act, to make use of His HOLY WORD with no farther end in view, than the improvement of pupils in *the art of reading*.

Since it has pleased GOD of His infinite compassion, to bless us with a book, whose Divine contents are variously adapted to all ages and conditions of mankind; it is certainly the indispensable duty of parents and teachers, to draw the attention of children to it, as soon as possible.—Every part of early instruction ought to be held in subordination to *the study of RELIGION*.—To excite in the minds of *young children* a desire of being made acquainted with the SCRIPTURES, ought doubtless to be our first care, instead of making *classical learning* and *polite accomplishment*, the only objects, as is too frequently the case; and as they advance in years, our next endeavour should be to instruct *youth* how to *form their judgment*, and *settle their opinions* by the ORACLES of DIVINE WISDOM. The neglecting to do so, is a capital and fatal error. It would be a very proper and pleasing exercise to young students, were they taught to examine the sentiments of such heathen authors as are usually put into their hands, by the *precepts of the gospel*.—To compare the doctrines of our SAVIOUR and His Apostles, with the systems of the most admired sages of antiquity.—To consider how far the examples of *heroism* and *virtue*, recorded in profane history, are worthy of the imitation of *Christians*.—To understand what it has pleased the ALMIGHTY GOVERNOR to reveal,
concerning

concerning the wonderful dispensations of His providence in respect to *nations*, and *individuals*—and to form a proper estimate, of the rewards of piety and righteousness held out by Christianity, when contrasted with the imperfect notions entertained on these important subjects, by the most enlightened among the heathens.

Were a method of this kind pursued, I am confident it would be attended with the most beneficial effects; youth would not be liable, as they now are, to imbibe *heathenish principles*—their passions would be kept in due subjection—their conduct would most likely reflect honour on their instructors, and be productive of lasting happiness to themselves, and all with whom they are connected.—They would be armed against the dangerous allurements of this world, and solicitous to prepare themselves for a better.

It must however be acknowledged, that these purposes cannot be effectually answered, merely by putting the Bible into the hands of young persons, without giving them proper directions for the perusal of it.—Great care is required in selecting for them, such parts of the Sacred Writings, as are suited to the progressive improvement of youth; and it was my experience of the inconveniencies attending an *indiscriminate use* of the SCRIPTURES, when educating my own children, that first suggested to me the design of collecting together the historical parts, and writing easy comments on them. In executing this plan, I found,
that

that without having recourse to the *prophetic writings* my work would be very imperfect, as the *prophets* are, in many instances, the only *historians*; and I happened fortunately to meet with a hint in the preface to Dr. Gregory Sharpe's *second argument in defence of Christianity*, which was very serviceable in pointing out the method which is here adopted, of transposing chapters and verses, in order to make the *historical* and *prophetical* books, explain each other by the mere force of *series* and *connection*.

A complete arrangement of the SCRIPTURES in this way is not practicable, because the times in which some of the SACRED ORACLES were written, cannot be exactly ascertained; neither will it be possible to understand others, till the consummation of all things shall have brought to pass the events, to which they will then be found to relate: however, it must, in the mean time, be very satisfactory, and a great confirmation of the truth of the inspired writings, to observe, the completion of such numerous predictions, as an attentive mind will easily perceive, even in the circumscribed limits of the following pages.

There appears to me one very material inducement for a more particular attention to the *prophecies*, than it is usual for the generality of Christians to give; which is, that *they* alone unfold the *councils of Divine wisdom*, in respect to NATIONS: and explain for what *causes* GOD inflicts *national judgments*, and on what *conditions* He averts them—particulars which it is the concern of every individual to know.

There

There is great reason to lament that the OLD TESTAMENT in general, is frequently neglected, even by pious Christians, as an *obsolete Book*.—The numerous allusions of our SAVIOUR and His Apostles, to different passages in it, furnish a sufficient argument for recommending the study of that invaluable repository of Divine truths; and St. Paul expressly says, that the events recorded there, were written for the example of those, who should live under the last dispensation*.

The NEW TESTAMENT is certainly the most important to *us*, but even this may be better understood, by comparing it with the former; and on the other hand, the OLD TESTAMENT may be read with additional advantage, by making frequent reference to the *New*, as the margin in our larger Bibles direct.—But this is a task that cannot be expected to be patiently performed by young persons, and therefore it has been my endeavour to lend them an assisting hand.

In selecting from the contents of the Sacred Volume I have attempted to exhibit *the great plan of DIVINE PROVIDENCE, in the creation, government, and redemption of mankind*; and in the Annotations annexed to each section, (which are founded upon the opinions of the most esteemed commentators, and a diligent study of the Scriptures themselves) I have exerted my best abilities *to point out the influence which the example of the Patriarchs, &c. ought to have on our conduct*;

* 1 Cor. x. 11.

and to stimulate the young mind to an earnest pursuit of eternal felicity.

The flattering attention which was bestowed on my labours, by persons of maturer age, as the volumes were successively produced, encouraged me to expatiate more largely on the *Doctrinal parts* of the NEW TESTAMENT, than I at first intended to do, when I had a view to the improvement of *young persons* only; and having had the pleasure to find, that the two last volumes were honoured with particular approbation, I thought it adviseable in this new Edition, to have the OLD TESTAMENT printed in a type, something smaller than before: that I might have room for *additional matter*, without encreasing the number of volumes.

Conscious that there was not in the first Edition, an uniformity of stile throughout the six volumes, I have here endeavoured to correct that defect, by writing new Annotations to the greater part of the first volume; the fourth also will be found considerably altered and enlarged.

I hope this work is now free from material errors, and omissions, for I have pursued the arduous pleasing task, with the most fervent desire of doing all possible justice to the important subject; and I present it to the public, in a full assurance that it will meet with the same kind indulgence, as my former productions.

I cannot conclude, without expressing the satisfaction I feel, from the apparent prospect, that a happy *reformation* is taking place among us.—The great pains
which

which are employed in diffusing *religious knowledge* among the *poor*, cannot stop there.—The influence of these laudable exertions, will probably be extended to the *higher classes of life*; and the SCRIPTURES will once more become the *favorite Book*, with youth of all denominations.

Young gentlemen and ladies surely will not contentedly remain ignorant of those Divine truths, with which the meanest of their inferiors will shortly be made acquainted, but will rather be ambitious of informing their own minds, that they may be able to assist others, in acquiring the MOST USEFUL OF ALL SCIENCES.

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ERRATA.

E R R A T A.

- P. 41, line 14, for *the* LORD GOD, read GOD.
- 52, lines 27 and 28, for *and regarded*, read *out of regard to*.
 Line 31, for *its*, read *their*.
- 61, line 20 and 21, dele *and shews in the blessing of them*.
- 65, line 31, for *Pelex*, read *Peleg*. Line 32, for *is* read *was*.
- 77, line 23, after *the son of*, add *Cush the son of Ham*
- 80, line 10, for *Cherdelaomer*, read *Chederlaomer*.
- 83, line 8, for *Old Testament*, read *New Testament*.
- 86, line 18, read *the prophecy*.
- 87, Instead of *We also learn that*, read *till they can*, &c.
- 102, line 20 and 21, read *were commissioned to go to Sodom for*, &c.
- 103, line 8, for *their*, read *the*. Line 9, for *it*, read *these cities*.
- 138, in the note, for *Primett*, read *Primatt*.
- 171, in the note, for 39, read 139.
- 191, line 20, for *delivered*, read *delivereth*,
- 271, In the note, for 35 read 36.
- 324, in the note, for *woonders*, read *wonders*.
- 346, for section LXII. read LXIV.
- 351, for section LXIV. read LXV.
- 357, in the note, for 62, read 64, page 347.
- 358, in note *, after *Rom. i.* add 25.
- 387, in the note, for 78, read 68.
- 392, in note †, for *Exod. xxi. 1.* read *Exod. xx. 2, 3.*

S E C T I O N I.

OF THE CREATION.

IN the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of GOD moved upon the face of the waters.

And GOD said, let there be light, and there was light. And GOD saw the light that it was good: and GOD divided the light from the darkness.

And GOD called the light day, and the darkness he called night; and the evening and the morning were the first day.

And GOD said, let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And GOD made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and it was so.

And GOD called the firmament heaven; and the evening and the morning were the second day.

And GOD said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so

And GOD called the dry land earth, and the gathering together of the waters called He seas: and GOD saw that it was good.

And GOD said, let the earth bring forth grafs, the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so.

And the earth brought forth grafs and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and GOD saw that it was good.

And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And GOD said, let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.

And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

And GOD made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also.

And GOD set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth:

And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and GOD saw that it was good.

And

And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

And GOD said, let the waters bring forth abundantly, the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.

And GOD created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind; and GOD saw that it was good.

And GOD blessed them, saying, be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And GOD said, let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

And GOD made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and GOD saw that it was good.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the LORD GOD made the earth and the heavens.

And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew; for the LORD GOD had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground.

But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

And GOD said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every thing that creepeth upon the earth.

And the LORD GOD formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This section is taken from the very beginning of the BIBLE, and is part of the book called *Genesis*, which contains the history of 2367 years: it was, at the command of GOD, written by Moses, whose history will be related in its proper place.

We are here taught that there is a GOD;—that the Heaven and the Earth had a beginning, and were produced, not by chance, but by design, according to the will of GOD. The progress of Creation is likewise described, which invites us to a particular contemplation of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the CREATOR. How wonderful it is to think that GOD could at once call into being, out of nothing, the materials of which this world and the heaven, or atmosphere with which it is surrounded, are composed! It was at first a *Chaos*, or mass, without form, and void of every thing which now renders it pleasing and useful, wrapt in an abyss of waters, and these waters covered with darkness; yet we may conclude, that it contained the principles of metals, minerals, salts, and all the terrestrial elements which were designed throughout all ages, to renew and maintain,

tain, whatever should be necessary for its future inhabitants; these principles still remain, and can never be destroyed, but by the GREAT CREATOR himself.*

In this state the world was not habitable; GOD therefore, by another astonishing act of Almighty power, divided the light from the darkness; and, by these means, completed the *first day* in which the evening took place of the morning. GOD is himself the fountain of light, and there is no darkness with him. But still the world was not fit for the reception of the creatures, which GOD designed should dwell in it; he therefore divided the waters which surrounded it, and caused a part of them to ascend and gather into clouds, that they might be in readiness to fall occasionally in rain, snow, and hail, to water and refresh the earth; and thus completed the *second day*. Beneath this body of waters, GOD placed a firmament of air; that the living creatures, when made, might have a proper element to breathe in.

Overspread with the waters which remained below the firmament, the earth was unfit for the nourishment of trees and plants; but the ALMIGHTY said, *Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear*; and the water immediately collected in a vast hollow, which he had prepared to receive it, and formed the *great deep*.—The earth at the same time consolidated, and appeared under the different forms of plains and mountains, hills, dales, and vallies; between which the water flowed from the great deep, and became seas, rivers, lakes, and streams.—Metalic and mineral substances, and all the various soils which constitute the interior parts of the earth, were arranged in different strata with perfect order.

* It is proved by philosophers, that it is impossible to destroy the least particle of original matter. See History of the Heavens, by the Abbè Pluche, vol. 2.

A still more delightful change now took place;—trees of every kind clothed with leaves and blossoms, and many bearing the most delicious fruits adorned the earth; grass of various sorts overspread the surface of the ground with its delightful verdure; innumerable plants, furnished with leaves and flowers, appeared among it; all growing in soils exactly suited to their different natures, and each bearing the seeds of future trees, plants, &c. that no species might be lost, but every one continue from age to age, without a new creation. It is observable that the spontaneous power of God produced these successive wonders, before the operations of nature were regulated. He wanted no *Sun* to dissolve the vegetable fluid, and animate his new creation; every tree or plant was made at once perfect in its kind before it grew, and the *third day* was completed.

It was the will of the ALMIGHTY, that the *Sun* should be instrumental to the future growth and preservation of the trees and vegetables; and that this, together with the moon, should serve to distinguish day and night, spring and summer, autumn and winter, months and years; God therefore either immediately created these beautiful luminaries, or cleared the atmosphere so that they might become visible. The stars also for the first time appeared. The great CREATOR knew the benefits, which would arise to the earth, and its various productions and inhabitants, from the benign influence of the heavenly bodies; and that He had regulated their motions with unerring wisdom;—He therefore established their courses, and pronounced them *good*; and thus ended the *fourth day*.

Having completed the formation of the Heaven, the Earth, and the Waters, and prepared food of various kinds, God next called into being the *animal creation*. The ocean, lakes, rivers, nay every little stream and brook,
now

now swarmed with living creatures; and innumerable birds, furnished with wings to transport themselves from place to place, and cloathed in the greatest variety of plumage, sported about or perched on the trees, and filled the air with their enchanting melody.—The CREATOR viewed them with delight, and ended the *fifth* day by blessing them, that they might become fruitful and multiply. A variety of terrestrial animals, consisting of every kind of beast, reptile, and insect, were then produced, each so admirably formed as to stand in no need of improvement or alteration.

What a magnificent place was the earth now become! but among all its inhabitants there was not one capable of admiring its wonderful construction, or of adoring the ALMIGHTY CREATOR: GOD, therefore, formed *Man* to have dominion over the inferior creatures; and, that he might be compassionate to them, and humble in his own eyes, made his body, like theirs, of the dust of the earth; but, to raise him above them, endued him with a rational soul, to which he communicated a principle of immortal life.

How thankful should we be to GOD, for making a world in every respect fit for such beings as we are, and furnishing it with whatever we stand in need of! Not the smallest insect, or the meanest plant, but deserves a particular examination; and those who have leisure, ought to study with attention the wonderful works of creative power and goodness. The great outline, which is here given, is sufficient to fill the mind with awe and reverence: but what should be our gratitude and love, when we reflect upon our own wonderful frame, and especially upon our spiritual part, which is capable of immortality!

S E C T. II.

THE FIRST COVENANT AND THE INSTITUTION
OF THE SABBATH.

AND the LORD GOD planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed, to dress it and to keep it.

And out of the ground made the LORD GOD to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food: the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

And the LORD GOD said, It is not good for man to be alone: I will make him an help meet for him.

And the LORD GOD brought unto Adam every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air, to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.

And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field: but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.

And the LORD GOD caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.

And the rib, which the LORD GOD had taken from man, made he woman, and brought her unto the man.

And

And Adam said, this is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.

So GOD created man in his own image, in the image of GOD created he him: male and female, created he them.

And GOD blessed them, and said, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

And GOD said, behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed: to you it shall be for meat.

And the LORD GOD commanded the man, saying, of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

And GOD saw every thing that He had made, and behold it was very good: and the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

And on the seventh day GOD ended his work which he had made: and He rested on the seventh day from all his work that He had made.

And GOD blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because, that in it He rested from all his work which GOD created and made.

And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How great must have been Adam's astonishment, when he first became sensible of his own existence *, and beheld the beauties of nature around him ! One of his first desires, as we may suppose, would naturally be to know the Author of his existence ; but who would assist him in the anxious search ? Even He who formed man with faculties to know and serve him. The ALMIGHTY did not abandon Adam to the uncertain speculations of his own reason in matters which were above its reach, but graciously condescended to appear to him as the LORD of all things, that he might know to whom his homage and adoration were due. To us, who live under a dispensation in which there is no open vision of the DEITY, and who consider GOD as a *spirit filling all space*, it would have been totally incomprehensible, how Adam could possibly see and converse with his MAKER ; had we not been taught by the Scriptures, that there is in the GODHEAD a VISIBLE IMAGE †, *very GOD of very GOD*, produced before all things by Almighty

* This is finely imagined by the great poet Milton. See Paradise Lost, Book 8.

† 2 Cor. iv. 4. Heb. i. 3. Col. i. 15, 16, 17. John x. 30.

power,

power, for the purpose of maintaining a sensible intercourse between GOD and his creatures, through whom he receives their homage, and by whom he communicates his favour to them. Of the form of this DIVINE IMAGE, the visions of the prophets give us as lively an idea, as the human mind, without the assistance of the outward senses, is capable of conceiving *; and with their description of Him we must be satisfied, till we behold Him coming in the clouds with all his holy angels.

That the first man might be at no loss in chusing a proper abode for himself, it pleased GOD to place him immediately in a beautiful garden, which was prepared for his reception, and which abounded with every thing that could render it pleasant and convenient. This spot was likewise remarkably distinguished by two trees, one called *the Tree of Knowledge*, the other *the Tree of Life*: the first was designed as a test of man's obedience; the other is supposed to have been the temporary reward of it.

Man was formed by GOD with faculties for society and conversation; but the animals could not converse with him. This was known to the CREATOR, but not to Adam; every living creature therefore was led by a divine impulse to pass in review before their new Governor; and he was instinctively taught to understand their natures, which enabled him to give to each a significant name.

Without doubt Adam was struck with the variety, beauty, and wonderful properties of the animal creation; but among them all he could not find a suitable companion for himself. GOD knew that it was not fit for him to lead a solitary life, therefore, in a miraculous manner, made the *Woman* out of one of his ribs, instead of forming her from the dust of the ground. Adam from this circumstance justly considered her, as another *self*; and understood, that it was his duty to love

* See Ezek. Ch. i. 26. 27. Ch. viii. 2. 3. Dan. vii. 9. Also the visions of St. John, in the Apocalypse.

her. God also at this time instituted the law of marriage * ; and ordained that, in succeeding generations, when the human race should be multiplied, a man and woman, united together in wedlock, should be considered as *one*, not to be separated, even by parental authority. /

It is said that God made man *in his own image*. This expression is difficult to explain: it is usually supposed to refer to the powers of the mind, the intellectual faculty, in which man resembles the DEITY distinctly from all other creatures in this world. The souls of the first pair, when they came out of their MAKER's hands, were impressed with the IMAGE OF GOD; for they were of a spiritual nature, adorned with wisdom and virtue, and endued with a principle of immortal life; but, I think, it is not unlikely that the outward form of mankind bore some faint resemblance to that glorious form, in which the LORD GOD made Himself visible in Eden. It was the will of the CREATOR that the race of mankind should increase; and, as they were all to descend from the first pair, and in process of time to be dispersed in different parts of the earth, He gave to Adam and his Wife, not merely as a gift for themselves, but as an inheritance for their posterity, *dominion* over all the inferior creatures; and this dominion will remain the exclusive privilege of mankind, as long as the world exists.

In the beginning of the world, the number of animals was very small: it is supposed, that two only of each kind were originally created; they could not therefore be given as food to mankind, without destroying some species. This, we may suppose, was one reason why Adam and his Wife had no permission to eat flesh; but there was another, as we may reasonably conjecture, which rendered animal food unnecessary; the privilege of eating of the TREE OF LIFE, which is supposed to have had a property of preserving the

* Math. xix. 4, 5.

human body in constant health, free from pain, diseases, and decay. Nothing was wanting to increase the happiness of mankind in Eden. This delightful abode was a terrestrial Paradise, a type of Heaven; in which the first pair enjoyed the transcendent felicity of conversing with their CREATOR, who, as we have already explained, vouchsafed to manifest Himself to their senses in his *visible Image*; and thus gave an undoubted proof of his existence; and, by *immediate revelation*, instructed them in those divine truths which were necessary for them to know; but which *human reason*, without divine assistance, could not have discovered.

No one, even in the present depraved state of human nature, can seriously reflect on the infinite mercy and goodness of God, which they have themselves experienced, without feeling sentiments of love, veneration, and gratitude, and an ardent desire to please him; we may therefore conclude that these sentiments existed in their full force, in the uncorrupted minds of our first parents, during their state of innocence and perfection. *Praise* and *adoration* they consequently would naturally offer; and, had they been formed for this world alone, it is likely that God would have required no other tribute and homage from them.

But God designed this world only as the temporary abode of human kind; and intending to give them souls endued with a principle of immortal life, which would naturally aspire after spiritual joys, and everlasting happiness, He graciously prepared this happiness for them in a better world, even before the earth was created*; but it was the will of the ALMIGHTY, that this happiness should be bestowed as the reward of *obedience*, founded on *faith*: He therefore gave to the first pair an easy law, as a test of their faith and obedience. This law is called the *First Covenant* [or agreement] between God and mankind; and these were the conditions of it:—God on his part, having given to mankind every thing necessary for their happiness, promised them a continuance of life, as long as they should be obedi-

* Ephe. i. 4. 1 Thess. v. 9. Matt. xxv. 34.

ent:--Mankind on their part were required to keep the Divine law, which consisted in a command, to abstain from the fruit of the *Tree of Knowledge*, with the penalty of death annexed to it, in case they disobeyed. Now, in order to render this obedience a *rational act*, it was necessary, that mankind should believe in the existence of GOD *, and that He was able to perform what He had promised, consequently their obedience was founded upon FAITH; and the TREE OF LIFE, like the bread and wine which Christians eat and drink in the Communion of the Lord's Supper, was a *Sacramental pledge* between GOD and mankind, by means of which GOD continued to them the blessings He promised; and by eating of which they testified their faith in his promises.

In respect to moral actions, the first pair seem to have had no express command; the injunction to keep the law of marriage had a reference to a future distant period of time. Justice to the animal creation was implied, in GOD's making known to mankind that he had allotted to the beasts, &c. the green herbs for food. Indeed moral institutions would have been useless to those, who had as yet no social connections. To the beasts, birds, &c. GOD freely gave whatever was necessary for their subsistence and happiness *without a law*; because he had not made them capable of obedience.

Having completed the works of Creation, and established the covenant above mentioned, GOD instituted the Sabbath by blessing the *seventh day* as a day of rest and sanctification; and this institution completed the *Dispensation of Innocence*. From the expression GOD *rested*, we are to understand no more than that he left off creating; not from weariness, for that can never happen to the ALMIGHTY; but he rested on the seventh day to take pleasure in his creatures, and to invite mankind, by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to a communion with himself, through the means of contemplation, prayer, and praise.

* Heb. xi. 6.

From this section we learn, in the first place, that mankind were never made for idleness. Industry seems to have been a necessary ingredient to complete their happiness in their most perfect state; and it is very certain, that no idle person, in the present condition of humanity, can enjoy any tolerable degree of felicity. In the next place, we are led to contemplate the goodness of GOD towards all his creatures, in providing necessaries for their subsistence; and to the human race in particular, in giving them the sovereignty over the animal creation, who would otherwise have been too powerful for them: but, above all, the goodness of GOD was displayed in affording mankind the light of *Divine revelation* *. Of these blessings *we are partakers*, and should never forget to be thankful for them.

We are also instructed to treat animals with humanity and kindness: The CREATOR still continues to shew his regard for them, by sending food for their nourishment; we have no right to withhold his gifts; and it is our duty to imitate GOD, as far as he has given us faculties and power to do so. We are likewise taught to be true to our matrimonial engagement, and to keep the Sabbath-Day holy, since it was from the beginning appropriated by the CREATOR to his own immediate service.

We find that Adam and his wife were not cloathed as we are obliged to be. It is likely that the fruit of the Tree of Life preserved them from feeling disagreeable sensations of heat or cold: but however this was, we may learn from the circumstance of their appearing before their Maker without the ornaments of dress, that we ought not to pride ourselves on what can give us no value, in the sight of GOD; but for which we are indebted to beasts and insects.

* Without divine revelation, the first pair could not have known, in the first instance, what food was proper for them; whether the animals were in subjection to them; or whether their own lives would be continued for a single instant.

S E C T III.

O F T H E F A L L O F M A N .

NOW the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD GOD had made: and he said unto the woman, Yea, hath GOD said ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, we may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, GOD hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall he touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, ye shall not surely die.

For GOD doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened: and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat:

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked: and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the LORD GOD walking in the garden, in the cool of the day: and Adam
and

and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD GOD, amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD GOD called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the LORD GOD said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? and the woman said, The Serpent beguiled me and I did eat.

And the LORD GOD said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field: upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

And unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow in thy conception, in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree,

tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it, cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also, and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field.

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD GOD make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And the LORD GOD said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the LORD GOD sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man, and he placed in the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

However wily and artful the serpent might be in his nature, he was not possessed of reason and speech, for these gifts were bestowed on the human race alone; and therefore he could not possibly have addressed the woman in the manner here related:

related : but other parts of scripture enable us to account for this astonishing circumstance.

We are there told, that Satan, or the devil, was formerly an angel of light, an inhabitant of heaven, and high in the favor of GOD : but, not contented with these happy privileges, he rebelled against GOD, and drew many other spirits to join in his rebellion, which brought the wrath of GOD upon them, and occasioned their being cast into a dreadful place of punishment, called Hell, there to suffer extreme agonies *. This dreadful event happened before the creation of mankind.

All we learn from the Scriptures concerning the fallen angels, is, that they are immortal spirits †, many in number, and of different ranks, acting under the direction of Satan ; and that they will endure an eternity of torments ; for they have corrupted themselves so that they are unfit for heaven ; and utterly unworthy of the favor of GOD. It seems that Satan, though banished from heaven, had power to range this world ‡ ; but we may assure ourselves that he was, and still continues to be, miserable beyond measure.

From other passages of Scripture we learn, that the devil was from the beginning an enemy to mankind, a deceiver, and the father of lies. This wicked disposition inclined him to do all things displeasing to GOD ; and to endeavour to destroy mankind, or at least to make them as wretched as himself ; and this disposition still continues, which he exercises by suggesting evil thoughts §. When the ALMIGHTY gave mankind a law, He left them a power of keeping or breaking it ||. This power is called *free will* ; without it there would have been no merit in their obedi-

* Rev. xii. 9. Ibid xx. 2. Luke x. 18.

† Matt. ix. 34. xii. 24. Mark v. 9. Rev. xii. 7. 8.

‡ Job i. 7. ii. 2.

§ 1 Peter v. 8. 2 Cor. ii. 11. Luke xxii. 3.

|| Rom. vi. 16. Eccus. xv. 14, &c.

ence, any more than there is in a clock, for pointing out the hours of the day ; or in any machine, that is put in motion by the art and direction of man. They were likewise endued with reason to direct their will ; and, without doubt, the first pair, as well as we, had the aid of GOD's spirit to strengthen them, when they were inclined to do their duty.

Satan has not the power to force mankind to sin *, but may be resisted and put to flight ; and therefore, in tempting mankind, he proceeded by cunning and artifice : he either entered into, or assumed the appearance of the serpent ; and with insinuating address and plausible persuasions, endeavoured to excite in the mind of the woman, pride, discontent, and ambition, with envious and impious notions of ALMIGHTY GOD ; and to persuade her to break the Divine command. The woman must know, that it was her duty to be contented with the condition in which GOD had placed her ; and that he had given her an express command not to eat the fruit of that tree, and had threatened her with DEATH if she disobeyed ; therefore she should on no account have presumed to eat of it. Adam was very weak in suffering his affection for his wife to lead him into sin against GOD, whom he ought to have loved above all things.

As soon as Adam and his wife had broken the covenant by disobedience, they were struck with a consciousness, that they had forfeited the protection of GOD, and began to be sensible of infirmities which they would never have known, had they continued obedient.

How happy must they have been, while innocent, in beholding the glory of the LORD GOD, and hearing his gracious words ! But can imagination form an idea of the agonizing pangs, which tore their distracted hearts, when the LORD, as usual, manifested his Divine presence in the gar-

* Eph. iv. 27. vii. 11. 2 Tim. iii. 26. James iv. 7. 1 Pet. v. 8. 9.

den? Instead of going with joy and gratitude to pay their adoration to HIM, they attempted to hide themselves, expecting that HE would immediately inflict the punishment of DEATH for their breach of the covenant; but see the goodness of GOD. HE called unto Adam, who otherwise would not have dared to appear, giving him and his wife an opportunity of confessing their sins, that they might become objects of that mercy, which he had resolved to shew to the contrite and penitent*: instead of punishing Adam and Eve with instant and eternal death, as in all probability He would have done, had they attempted to justify themselves, GOD revived their spirits, and preserved them from despair, by pronouncing a sentence which doomed them indeed to temporal evils, ending in the death of the *Body*, but which was accompanied with a promise that implied a final victory over their spiritual enemy, and a restoration of righteousness.

Though the ALMIGHTY doomed these wretched sinners to punishment, he forgot not his intended mercy to the human kind. The crime of the first pair being known to GOD's omniscience, his wisdom and goodness had provided a remedy against the death, which they would bring into the world †; and though the time was not come for the full revelation of the important mystery, he vouchsafed to comfort Adam and his wife, with hopes that one born of a woman should repair the mischief, which Satan had brought upon mankind ‡. By the Serpent was certainly meant the devil, by his seed we are to understand *Evil* which he sowed in the world ||; the expression *bruising the heel* signified his subtle and mischievous practices against the human race; and by the seed of the woman is to be understood, the MESSIAH

* Ps. xxxiv. 18. Prov. xxviii. 13. Isa. lvii. 15. Jam. iv. 10.

† John i. 9.

‡ 2 Timothy i. 9. 1 Pet. i. 2.

§ See Bishop Sherlock's dissertation on the Mosaic account of the Fall.

|| Matt. xiii. 24, 25, &c.

our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the restorer of righteousness, who was finally, as the representative of mankind, to overcome the devil, and put an end to his power, which is implied in the expression of *bruising his head*. The promise therefore, that *The seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*, was God's second covenant with mankind, which is fully explained in the New Testament. The first covenant, respecting the blessings of Paradise, was made with the first pair only. In the second, the whole race of mankind were included.

While man continued innocent, the earth had yielded him spontaneous nourishment, prepared by the providence of God. The ground was now cursed for his sake, that he might be obliged to labour hard for his subsistence, and he was condemned to eat the herb of the field, like the beasts, to whom he had made himself equal by abusing his reason.

But that the human race might still be distinguished from the brutes, over whom dominion was given them, it pleased God to suggest to their reason, means of rendering the fruits of the field more palatable and wholesome to their nature, by making some of them into bread *.

As for the woman, she was sentenced to bring forth children in sorrow, which implied, that an increase of family would be the cause of pain and anxiety to her: she was also to be in subjection to her husband, as a punishment for acting in so material a point without him, and taking advantage of his tenderness, to make him a partner of her crime.

Satan, in all probability, fled back to Hell, when he had compassed his wretched designs; but he could not have escaped the vengeance of God, had the ALMIGHTY thought fit to inflict additional misery on him at this time. Scrip-

* Every good gift and every perfect gift (says St. James) is from above, and cometh down from the FATHER OF LIGHT." It is no improbable conjecture therefore, that the thought of making corn into bread was originally the effect of Divine inspiration.

ture informs us, that he and his angels are reserved for a greater degree of punishment, at the end of the world *. The disappointment of Satan's principal view in tempting mankind, must have been a great mortification to his pride and malice; and to mortify him still more, the creature he had entered into was degraded from its rank in the creation, and made a fit emblem of his spiteful temper. God had an undoubted right to alter the nature of the serpent, as his infinite wisdom thought good; and as the serpent was not possessed of reason, he could not know what use the devil put him to, or be sensible of the alteration he had undergone.

With what heavy hearts must Adam and Eve turn their backs on that delightful abode, in which they had enjoyed such invaluable privileges!

From what we ourselves experience of the condition of humanity, since mankind learnt to know *evil* as well as *good*, we may be certain, that everlasting life, under such circumstances, would be a misfortune, instead of a blessing; we should, therefore, be thankful, that the *Tree of Life* is not within our reach; and that the hopes of mankind are transferred to another world.

It is supposed that, before the *Fall of man*, beasts had multiplied; and that God, in consideration of the penitence of mankind, delayed the execution of the penalty of death; and commanded Adam to kill some, and offer them in sacrifice, as an acknowledgment that he and his wife were deserving of death, but respited a little while by God's mercy. And it is probable, that God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of these beasts, to shew them, in a figurative way, that as clothes covered their bodies, so sacrifices, offered according to God's own appointment, would, in some sense, cover and

* 2 Pet. ii. 4. Jude vi.

protect them from the punishment, which their sin had deserved*.

The expulsion of mankind from Paradise was attended with great solemnity. The LORD GOD banished them himself from the *Tree of Life*, and placed some of the Heavenly Host as guards to prevent their future approach to it. All we know of the nature of the Cherubim is from the prophetic writings†.

From this section we learn, in the first place, the danger of a vain curiosity to know what it has pleased GOD to conceal from mankind. This led our first parents into the sin of disobedience; therefore all knowledge which we cannot obtain by lawful means, we should be contented to forego.

In the next place we learn to be contented with the condition of humanity. The CREATOR has made a great many different orders of beings, and placed them in different ranks, according to his good pleasure; it is therefore sinful to wish to be any other kind of creature than we are; and still more so, to be envious of the perfections of GOD himself.

Since the devil suggested wickedness to our first parents, and the Scriptures inform us, that he is the professed enemy of mankind in general, we must endeavour to guard our minds against his artful insinuations. Whenever we find in our hearts any inclinations contrary to our known duty, we should immediately have recourse to GOD by prayer, that he may by his grace enable us to overcome the *evil one*, who will flee away if thus resisted. We should also be very careful not to desire any thing, merely because it is *pleasant to our eyes*, and *good for food*; but should consider, first whether it

* Dr. Watts's view of Scripture History.

† See Ezek. Ch. i. v. 5 and seq.

be consistent with our duty to wish for it---and if at any time we suffer ourselves to be betrayed into sin, we should on no account endeavour to entice others to be partners in our guilt.

From the behaviour of our first parents, immediately after they had disobeyed GOD's command, we see, that sin naturally leads to shame and fear; we also perceive, that human reason alone can give to sinners no certain hope of pardon, much less of immortality; therefore, instead of seeking to justify ourselves, and claiming forgiveness, and eternal life, as our natural right, we should, like our first parents, be ready to confess our sins, and rely on divine mercy for pardon, which GOD graciously promised to all mankind, as his own free gift, through the *seed of the woman*, who alone can bruise the Serpent's head. /

We, and all the human race, have cause to deplore the transgression of our first parents; because, as they forfeited the joys of Paradise, they could not convey the inheritance of these blessings to their posterity, any more than a man can leave an estate to his children, after having forfeited it to the crown, by an act of rebellion. Neither could they claim for their descendants an exemption from death, because they themselves subjected human nature to death.

The *first* covenant was not renewed to mankind in general; all the descendants of Adam are heirs to the *second* only, and have by *nature* no right to the hope of life eternal.—This is the gift of GOD, through the *seed of the woman*.

It does not become us to murmur and repine, that we have not the same privileges as Adam and Eve; for in all probability we should have abused them as they did.—It is true, that the *Tree of Life* is not within our reach.—Death is entered into the world, and every one that is born must submit to it; but immortal happiness is still attainable, and

we may learn the conditions of it from the Scriptures; let us therefore, with thankful hearts, acknowledge the Divine goodness to fallen man; submit with patient resignation to the natural evils of humanity, and even to death itself; since God has provided a remedy, which will prevent our spiritual enemy from effecting our final destruction, if we comply with the terms of salvation.

S E C T. IV.

THE DEATH OF ABEL.

AND Eve bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD.

And she again bare his brother Abel, and Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD.

And Abel he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof, and the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering.

But unto Cain and his offering he had not respect, and Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the LORD said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?
And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.
And to thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule
over

over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother : and it came to pass when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the LORD said unto Cain, where is Abel thy brother ? And he said, I know not, am I my brother's keeper ?

And he said, what hast thou done ? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand.

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength ; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the LORD, my punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold thou hast driven me this day from the face of the earth ; and from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth, and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the LORD said unto him, therefore every one that slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him seven-fold. And the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain's wife bare Enoch, and he builded a city,

and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and Adam's wife bare a son, and she called his name Seth: for God, said she, hath given me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.

And to Seth there was also a son born, and he called his name Enos; then began men to call themselves by the name of the LORD*.

* See the margin of the Bible.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Abel seems to have been of an amiable, religious disposition; Cain, on the contrary, of a morose, unthankful temper; but the particular cause of his inveterate hatred to his brother was, that the LORD GOD had rejected his sacrifice and accepted Abel's. There is reason to suppose (as we observed before) that sacrifices were appointed by GOD himself, because, in that early age of the world, man was not allowed to kill any thing for food: in Eden he lived upon fruits, and after he was expelled from thence, his sentence was to *eat bread in the sweat of his brow*: therefore it is not likely, that he would have thought of appeasing the anger of GOD, by killing an innocent creature: but, as the ALMIGHTY was pleased to reveal to Adam and Eve his gracious purpose of sending *a restorer of righteousness*, it is likely that he instituted the rite of sacrificing animals, as a representation of the great sacrifice to be made by CHRIST; and, as a means whereby mankind might express *faith or belief* in the promises of GOD; for these purposes (it is presumed) He commanded them to offer unto Him some of the fruits of the earth, as
an

an acknowledgement of their dependance on him ; and some of their flocks, as an atonement for their sins ; and, as a mark of acceptance, sent fire from Heaven to consume the offering : not that mankind were able to lay their sins upon the creature they put to death ; but to intimate that the LORD would pardon their transgressions, for the sake of their faith and obedience, which he had commanded them to express by their offerings. /

It is strongly implied in this section, that the LORD GOD continued to manifest his Divine presence : and, it is no improbable conjecture, that some peculiar spot was sanctified by His appearance. Let us, then, suppose, that Cain and Abel repaired to this holy ground *, and offered their sacrifices. Cain's consisted only of some of the fruits of the earth ; from which we may infer, that he appeared before GOD *as a just person, wanting no repentance*, but merely acknowledging GOD's goodness and bounty. Abel, conscious of his own imperfections, offered some of the firstlings of his flocks, as an *atonement* agreeably to the divine institution, by which he testified his *faith*, or reliance on the promises and appointments of GOD : this faith rendered his sacrifice acceptable † ; the want of it occasioned Cain's to be rejected. That Cain might not plead ignorance, it pleased the LORD to point out the omission ; and to remind him, that he had not made expiation for his sin ; but, instead of repairing his fault, Cain went away in wrath ; and though the LORD GOD had reproved him for his discontent and envy with the utmost mildness, he continued to indulge those baneful passions, till he brought himself to commit the horrid crime of fratricide !

So great was the pride of Cain, that he could not bear a superior, even in the favour of GOD ; what then must have been his mortification to find himself the most abject of mankind ; banished to a distant land, far from that hallowed spot,

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy. † Heb. xi. 4.

which was then distinguished by the frequent appearance of the LORD GOD; and destitute of that *faith*, which is the only sure foundation of *hope*? Sensible, in part, of his wretched condition, Cain particularly lamented, that he was driven from the *face of the LORD*; and expressed the most dreadful apprehensions, that the hand of every one would be ready to cut off such a monster: yet he disdained (as it seems) to implore the pardon of GOD, nor did he express remorse for the wicked action he had committed: however, it pleased the LORD, not only to spare his life, but to threaten that he would punish whoever should take upon himself to kill Cain, because it would be presumption to alter the sentence of GOD, who thought proper to prolong the days of the first murderer, in order (as we may suppose) to make him a living example of the unhappiness which follows the commission of this dreadful crime; and also to give him time for repentance.

As Abel was evidently in favour with GOD, we cannot suppose, that he was abandoned to the rage of his brother as a *punishment*; on the contrary, we may regard his early death, in reference to Providence, as a mark of the Divine approbation, and reasonably conclude, that, as he testified a true faith, he was comforted with hope of being received into a better world.

The Scripture is silent in respect to the sorrow of Adam and Eve on this mournful occasion; but, without doubt, it must have been a great affliction to them, to lose a beloved son by the unnatural hand of his own brother; and to have the offender condemned to drag on a wretched life, under the displeasure of GOD, and the contempt of mankind; and their sorrow was certainly greatly aggravated by the reflection, that they themselves had brought death into the world. In respect to the mark that was set upon Cain, there is no certainty; but some learned authors think, that the verse
which

which mentions it is not exactly translated, and that it should be rendered, *set a mark before Cain*; that is, wrought some miracle or sign, to assure him that he should not be slain: however it was, it will answer no purpose to puzzle ourselves with such questions as these, which are merely matter of curiosity, as none of Cain's posterity are now remaining in the world.

Though none of the immediate posterity of Adam and Eve are mentioned by their names in the Bible, excepting Cain, Abel, and Seth, it is certain that they had other children before the murder of Abel, because we read of Cain's wife, who must have been the daughter of Adam and Eve. According to calculations that have been made, it is probable, that, by the time Adam was 130 years old, there might be of his children, grand children, and great grand-children, many thousands of people in the world*. Seth is particularly mentioned, because, from him was to descend, in a regular succession, the SAVIOUR of mankind, *the promised seed of the woman*.

At the end of this section we read, that after the birth of Enos, *men began to call themselves by the name of the LORD*; from this expression, compared with the beginning of the next section, we are led to think, that all those, who believed in the Divine promises, solemnly devoted themselves to the service of the LORD, and expressed their faith by offering the sacrifices which he had appointed; on which account the LORD GOD adopted them as His *sons*; and, as such, gave them a title to the heavenly inheritance intended to be purchased for the human race, by the Restorer of Righteousness.

Much practical instruction may be collected from this history of Cain and Abel.—In the first place, we may infer from it, that the public prayers, (which are now in the

* See Stackhouse on the Bible.

place of sacrifices) are not acceptable to GOD from persons who harbour hatred and malice in their minds. We may also learn, that wicked actions, however secretly committed, cannot be hid from GOD; and that the SUPREME BEING Himself, is the avenger of murder, and will bring it to light by some means or other; at least, will not suffer a *murderer* to know that inward peace, which arises from a quiet conscience.—The fear and dread of discovery must be continual torments to him, and will compel him to flee from place to place.—We are likewise taught, that to be driven from the *face of the LORD*, or to be cut off from the Society of GOD's people, and deprived of the blessing of communion with GOD, in social worship, as a murderer must necessarily be, is the greatest punishment that can be inflicted.

Brothers and sisters are particularly instructed, by this portion of Scripture, to cherish from their early years an affectionate attachment to each other, which, by its endearments, will prove a source of continual comfort and pleasure: by repeated acts of kindness they may secure to themselves a set of faithful, disinterested friends, ready on all occasions to do them good offices; and will have the additional satisfaction of increasing the felicity of their parents. But those, who indulge selfishness of mind, and are continually studying how to obtain a preference to themselves, and are envious of the superior advantages of their brothers and sisters, commit a great offence against God, are enemies to society, by destroying the peace of families, and cannot expect to be esteemed or beloved.

S E C T. V.

THE GENEALOGY FROM ADAM IN THE LINE
OF SETH, TO THE TIME OF THE DELUGE.

ADAM lived an hundred and thirty years, and had a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: and the days of Adam after the birth of Seth, were eight hundred years: and he had sons and daughters: and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died.

And Seth lived an hundred and five years, and begat Enos: and Seth lived after he begat Enos eight hundred and seven years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Seth were nine hundred and twelve years: and he died.

And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan: And Enos lived after he begat Cainan eight hundred and fifteen years, and begat sons and daughters: and the days of Enos were nine hundred and five years: and he died.

And Cainan lived seventy years, and begat Mahalaleel: and Cainan lived after he begat Mahalaleel eight hundred and forty years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Cainan were nine hundred and ten years: and he died.

And Mahalaleel lived sixty and five years, and begat Jared: and Mahalaleel lived after he begat Jared

eight hundred and thirty years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Mahalaleel were eight hundred ninety and five years : and he died.

And Jared lived an hundred sixty and two years, and he begat Enoch : and Jared lived after he begat Enoch eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Jared were nine hundred sixty and two years : and he died.

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah : and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years : and Enoch walked with GOD : and he was not ; for GOD took him.

And Methuselah lived an hundred eighty and seven years, and begat Lamech : And Methuselah lived after he begat Lamech seven hundred eighty and two years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred sixty and nine years : and he died.

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son : and he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed. And Lamech lived after he begat Noah five hundred ninety and five years, and begat sons and daughters : and all the days of Lamech were seven hundred seventy and seven years : and he died.

And

And Noah was five hundred years old : and Noah begat Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The design of this section is to shew the regular descent from Adam to Noah, with a view to preserve the genealogy of the *promised seed*.

We do not read that Adam and Eve were guilty of any capital crimes after they left Paradise, and may therefore suppose, that the general tenor of their conduct was agreeable to the will of God, and that they educated their children in the principles of religion. It pleased the LORD to spare Adam's life for a length of years; and, in all probability, Eve also lived to a good old age, but they must have felt severely the evils which their disobedience first brought into the world : however, as they still enjoyed the advantage of an immediate intercourse with the LORD GOD, it is reasonable to think, that they were comforted with hopes of enjoying, through his infinite mercy, that happiness in a future state, which they had lost in this.

It is said of Enoch, that he *walked with God*. By this expression we may understand, that Enoch complied with all the ordinances of GOD.

The Son of Sirach * tells us, that he left to all generations an example of repentance, and the Apostle informs us that he was translated, or taken to heaven without dying, on account of his faith, and that before his translation he had this testimony, namely, *that he pleased God* †.

Methuselah was the oldest man that ever lived. Longevity must have been a great blessing to the first race of mankind, while they lived good lives and enjoyed healthy constitu-

* Eccles. xlv. 16.

† Heb. xi. 5.

tions; but, according to the present state of the world, it would be an intolerable evil. Lamech, the father of Noah, pronounced a remarkable prophecy at the birth of this son.—*This same shall comfort us concerning our work, and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.* From this prediction, it is supposed *, “ That the curse upon the ground, pronounced at the fall, subsisted in all its rigour to the days of Lamech; that the work and toil necessary to raise from the ground a sufficient support for life, was a grievous and irksome burden; and that there was an expectation in his time, at least among those who had not quite forgot GOD, of a deliverance from the curse of the fall; of which deliverance he understood his son Noah would be the instrument. We shall see, as we proceed, in what manner this prediction was completed.

The birth of Noah happened in the eleventh century after the fall.

* See Bishop Sherlock, on Prophecy.

S E C T. VI.

THE GENEALOGY FROM CAIN.

AND Cain's wife bare Enoch, and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch. And unto Enoch was born Irad, and unto Irad, Mehujael, and unto Mehujael, Methusael, and unto Methusael, Lamech.

And Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.

And

And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron: and the sister of Tubal-cain was Naamah.

And Lamech said unto his wives, Adah and Zillah, Hear my voice; ye wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech; for I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt. If Cain shall be avenged seven fold, truly Lamech seventy and seven fold.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is remarked, that, in this genealogy, there is not one good person pointed out; several of them became famous for useful and curious arts, which shews, that GOD does not confine this kind of knowledge to the best people; and, therefore, it is wrong for any to value themselves merely for their skill in human arts and sciences; it is the proper application of their talents, to the glory of GOD, and the good of mankind, that can alone render them truly estimable.

Lamech, the descendant of Cain, is supposed to have been the first man who had two wives: he is thought by some to have killed Cain; but it rather appears from the text, that he had slain another person, and was fearful GOD would inflict a greater punishment upon him, than he had on the first murderer; because he had presumed to kill a man, notwithstanding he had seen the evil consequences which the perpetration of murder brought upon Cain.

There is great similarity of names in the descendants of Seth and Cain; we must be careful not to confound one with the other.

S E C T. VII.

THE BUILDING OF NOAH'S ARK.

AND it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, that the Sons of GOD saw the daughters of men, that they were fair; and they took them wives of all which they chose.

And the LORD said, my spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

There were giants in the earth in those days, and also after that; the same became mighty men, which were of old men of renown. And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *the whole imagination, purposes, and desires** of his heart were only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

And the LORD said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth; both man and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowl of the air, for it repenteth me that I have made them.

But Noah found grace in the sight of the LORD. Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with GOD. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

* See margin of the Bible.

And GOD said unto Noah, the end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold I will destroy them with the earth.

Make thee an ark of gopher-wood: rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: the length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the doors of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof: with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

And behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die.

But with thee will I establish my covenant: and thou shalt come into the ark; thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee: they shall be male and female.

Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind: two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive.

40 THE BUILDING OF NOAH'S ARK.

Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and the female.

Of the fowls of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.

And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee and for them.

Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* We may reasonably suppose, that the murder of Abel was not the first wicked action which Cain had committed. It seems as if he were deeply practiced in guilt, by the sullen reply he made to the LORD,—*Am I my brother's keeper?* † nor does there appear any submission, in the manner of his receiving the just sentence that the LORD pronounced against him: his answer is the language of unsubdued pride, and desperation: therefore, it is likely that he hardened his heart against God, and brought up his family according to his own bad principles.

We observed before, that the heaviest part of Cain's sentence, was, his being driven from the *face of the LORD*. From God's usual dealings with sinners, as described in the Holy Scriptures, we have reason to think, that this would not have been inflicted, had he been contrite and penitent.

Alienated from God, Cain was exposed to the temptations of Satan; and it is not unlikely, that this spiritual

* Hingeston on the Covenants.

† See Section 4.

enemy

enemy suggested to him, or to some of his wicked race, the worshipping of *creatures*, instead of the CREATOR; for we are told by the Author of the Book of Wisdom *, that *the devising of idols was the beginning of the corruption of life*; and St. Paul tells us, that *when men knew GOD, they glorified him not as GOD, but changed the glory of the incorruptible GOD, into an image, made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and beasts, and creeping things*. The same Apostle also informs us, that the SON OF GOD (called in Genesis the LORD GOD) is *the brightness of his Father's glory* †, and *the express image of his person*. The sin of idolatry, therefore, seems, in the first instance, to have consisted in men's dishonouring GOD, by setting up imaginary deities, even while the LORD GOD vouchsafed to manifest his presence, by his *Visible Image*, or, as Christians stile him, his *only begotten SON*. From this account of the origin of idolatry, we may be able to comprehend, what is meant in the beginning of this section, by the two sorts of persons, distinguished by the different titles of the *Sons of GOD*, and the *Daughters of Men*.

Seth continued to dwell in that part of the world, which was distinguished by the visible presence of the LORD GOD, worshipped Him as the Creator and Governor of the World, offered the sacrifices which He appointed, and kept in mind the promise of a Restorer of Righteousness; and brought up his family in the true religion. We may also suppose, that the rest of Adam's posterity (except the unnatural branch that was cut off) followed his example: these then were the *Sons of GOD*; and Cain and his family, with such as apostatized from the LORD GOD, and joined with them, the *Sons of Men*.

It is here intimated, that the *Sons of GOD* were at first very careful to keep themselves separate from the *Sons of*

* Wisdom of Solomon, xiv. 12.

† Heb. i. 2. 3. 2 Cor. iv. 4. Col. i. 15.

Men;

Men; but after a time, they married wives from amongst them. This mixture of good and wicked people, was productive of very bad consequences. It is most likely, that these *Daughters of Men*, and their impious relations, enticed to idolatry the *Sons of GOD*, who had married them; and these by degrees enticed others.

Such a race of people, as the Antideluvians are described to have been, were unfit to live; therefore, we cannot wonder that they were at last destroyed; but we find, that the long-suffering of GOD was very great; for he mercifully delayed, for an hundred and twenty years, the judgment he intended to bring upon them.—By the expression, *my spirit shall not always strive with men*, &c. we may understand, that means of grace were offered to this people; but they resisted the HOLY SPIRIT, that is to say, gave way to their own vicious inclinations, when good thoughts were suggested to them*.

GOD is a Being of infinite perfection, and not subject to conflicting passions; so that by *His repenting that he had made man*, and being *grieved at his heart*, we are to understand no more, than that his patience and long-suffering had exceeded the utmost indulgence mankind had reason to expect; and that he had determined, at his own appointed time, to inflict the punishment due to their wickedness. GOD, however, did not bring a sudden destruction on the earth; for he made his purpose known to Noah, and commanded him to inform them of it, and to preach *righteousness* to them; that is to say, faith in GOD's promises, repentance of sins, amendment of life, and strict adherence to the worship of the LORD GOD. Had they obeyed Noah's admonitions, they would have been preserved; for it was the original appointment of GOD, (as we may understand from many passages of Scripture) that general and sincere repentance should avert public judgments†.

* 2 Pet. ii. 5. † Joel ii. 13. Dan. ix. 9, 10. 1 John i. 8, 9.

We are not to suppose, that Noah was a man entirely free from sin; without doubt, he was, like others, subject to human infirmities; but, in respect to his FAITH, he was *perfect*; for even the example of the whole race of mankind, could not draw him from his belief and trust in the LORD GOD; and he testified this faith by a ready *obedience* to GOD's command of building an Ark, for the preservation of himself and his family *.—The expression, *walking with GOD*, signifies a conformity to GOD's will, in preference to human inclination.

If GOD had not made known his intention of destroying the earth and its inhabitants, Noah might have supposed the deluge to be the effect of chance; and after he received this intimation, had he been left to the guidance of *human reason* alone, he would have been utterly at a loss to know what to do in such an emergency, for ships had not yet been invented; and we can scarcely think, that the idea of building a vessel to float on the surface of the water, would have occurred to his mind: he therefore found the benefit of Divine direction, even in his worldly affairs; nor was this benefit confined to him;—instructed by his history, mankind have learnt, that, under the providence of GOD, *they may commit their lives to a small piece of wood, and pass the rough sea in a weak vessel* †.

It is supposed, that the ark was built more in the form of a house, with a sloping covering like a roof, for the wet to run off. Noah had not occasion for sails, rudder, or compass, because no art of man was requisite for the preservation of his vessel; these useful appendages were successively added to ships, as the necessities or experience of mankind led to improvement in the art of navigation.

It would have been difficult to Noah, who, we may suppose, was unacquainted with figures, and ignorant how ma-

* Heb. xi. 7.

† Wisdom of Solomon xiv. 5.

ny species of creatures the world contained, to calculate the requisite size of the ark : he would likewise, in all probability, have been at a loss to know what materials to make use of, without GOD's direction ; neither could he have known what quantity of food to provide ; and, after all, it would have been out of his power to collect the different creatures together, had not GOD caused them to come instinctively, as those first created went to Adam.

We read, that Noah was commanded to make a window in the ark ; of this we shall speak in a succeeding section.

The covenant, which GOD promised to establish with Noah, was that made with Adam after the fall *.

The clean beasts are supposed to have been those made use of in sacrifices ; the unclean, those which were never applied to such sacred purposes.

From this section we learn, the great danger to which religious people expose themselves, by marrying among wicked ones ; and that, in forming matrimonial connections, regard should rather be had to goodness of disposition, than to personal beauty.

We also learn, that the lives of mankind are entirely at the disposal of GOD ; therefore, it is folly to expect length of days, according to the course of nature, and to put off repentance to a future period : and, by the fate of the giants, who perished with the rest, we understand, that extraordinary strength and stature are no securities against Divine vengeance.

We are farther instructed, that the power of GOD is unlimited, and that the elements are entirely under his command.

If we are ready to condemn the Antideluvians for not regarding the admonitions of Noah, let us listen with reverence and attention to the instructions, which are given to us by GOD's Ministers ; and be careful not to do any thing contrary to His will contained in the Holy Scriptures.

* See Section 3.

S E C T. VIII.

THE FLOOD.

AND the LORD said unto Noah, come thou, and all thy house, into the ark : for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. For yet seven days and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights : and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him.

And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood. In the self-same day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; they, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort : and they went in unto Noah into the ark ; the male and the female, as God had commanded Noah ; two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life : and they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him : and the LORD shut him in.

And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth.

In

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

And the flood was forty days upon the earth: and the waters increased, and bare up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth. And the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth: and the ark went upon the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth: and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered.

And all flesh died that moved upon the earth: both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth; and of every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed, which was upon the face of the ground; both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark.

And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What an honour was conferred upon Noah, by the gracious invitation given to him by God, *Come thou and all thy*

thy house into the ark, &c. ; and how great must be his satisfaction in receiving the Divine approbation, *For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation!* We are told by the Apostle to the Hebrews, that Noah's righteousness, which was accepted by GOD, consisted in a true *Faith** ; that is to say, Noah believed all that GOD had at that time revealed, and lived agreeably to this belief.

Nothing could be more unlikely to happen, according to the common course of nature, than an universal deluge : yet Noah, actuated by a religious fear†, having prepared every thing as GOD commanded, entered into the ark with all his family ; which was a striking proof of his belief of GOD's power, and confidence in the Divine promises. 'Tho' it is not mentioned, we may conclude that he had taught his family the same principles ; for without such a reliance on the ALMIGHTY, what would have been their apprehensions, when the doors of the ark were shut upon them ?

We may easily suppose, that the rest of the inhabitants of the earth ridiculed Noah, for what appeared to them unnecessary precautions. They foresaw no danger, but pursued their voluptuous pleasures, till the flood came and found them feasting and revelling, marrying and giving in marriage ‡.

There is reason to think, that the deluge began on the seventh day of the week ; if so, it was, in all probability, intended as a judgment on the Antideluvians, for their habitual profanation of the Sabbath.

In order to shew, that the deluge did not happen according to the common course of nature, but was the effect of the miraculous power of GOD, we are told by what means it was brought about.

In the history of the creation || we read, that GOD di-

* Heb. xi. 7. † Ibid. ‡ See Matt. xxiv. 38, 39. || Section 1.
vided

vided the waters from the waters, and placed a firmament betwixt them, &c.

In order to destroy the earth, the ALMIGHTY let loose the waters, and shewed, that it is his Providence alone, which renders that element an invaluable blessing, which, if not confined within due bounds, is capable of becoming a most destructive evil.

What a melancholy sight would it have been to Noah and his family, to behold the destruction of all living creatures, and to see the earth reduced to a Chaos! But there is reason to believe that they had not this severe trial. The ark (as we learn from a former section *) had no windows in the sides, and only one at the top, of small dimensions. This could not be designed to convey light; nor, indeed, could any one window, wherever situated, have answered this purpose to a vessel consisting of three stories, even if the sun had shone forth with resplendent brightness, much less when the sky was constantly obscured with clouds. It is therefore probable, that the ark was illumined in a supernatural way, (as the houses of the Israelites afterwards were †) in order to assure Noah and his family, that they were under the immediate guidance and protection of the ALMIGHTY.

When we reflect on the violence of the rain, poured in torrents from the sky; the impetuosity of the subterraneous waters, and the length of time they prevailed; we cannot wonder, that every living substance was destroyed.

Many proofs of a general deluge may be collected from history. The inhabitants of most parts of the known world have some tradition concerning this memorable event; and it is very common to find at the tops of exceedingly high mountains, hundreds of miles from the sea, large beds of shells, bones and teeth of fishes; and in other places fragments of trees, the remains of land and sea animals, &c.

* See Section 6. † See Exod. x. 23. Wisd. xviii. 1.

which could scarcely have been mixed together by any other accident.

At first sight, it appears hard that the beasts and other creatures, who were incapable of sinning, should perish with sinful man ; but, if we consider that instant death was not so great an evil to the brute creation, as others which would, in all probability, have fallen upon them, had they not been drowned, we shall view it in another light. God knew, that the alteration, which the earth was to undergo in consequence of the deluge, would deprive them of sustenance, and that numbers would perish with hunger ; in which case, their misery would have been much greater than what they suffered. In all general judgments, the innocent must unavoidably perish with the guilty ; but in this case they are not to be regarded as the victims of God's vengeance, but as taken away by his mercy from the evil to come. It is very plain, from this portion of Scripture, that it was the sins of men that provoked God to bring this signal judgment upon the earth.

Though the fishes are not mentioned, we have reason to believe, that many of them also perished, by the violent commotion of the waters ; but that God by a miracle preserved some of every species, which is, at least, as easy as to suppose a new creation of this part of the animal world.

If we contemplate the history of the deluge, merely as it relates to the inhabitants of the old world, it appears a striking example of God's vengeance against incorrigible sinners ; but if we regard it, as the Scriptures teach us to do *, as a warning to ourselves, it will surely be a check upon immorality and impiety, for none among us can be certain that the end of the world is not at hand. The day of judgment will come as suddenly as the flood did :—but supposing that many ages should revolve before this awful

* See Matt. xxiv. 38, 39.

period takes place, in respect to every individual on earth, it is certainly near:—a few short years will, in a natural way, determine our fate to all eternity; and even these may be shortened by some sudden and unexpected visitation.—Let us then shun the example of a corrupt generation, and imitate that of Noah, who feared God, and sought the righteousness which is by faith; that we may be heirs of salvation.

S E C T. IX.

NOAH, &c. BY GOD'S COMMAND, COME OUT
OF THE ARK.

AND GOD remembered Noah, and every living thing, and all the cattle that was with him in the ark: and GOD made a wind to pass over the earth, and the waters assuaged.

The fountains also of the deep, and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained.

And the waters returned from off the earth continually, and after the end of the hundred and fifty days, the waters were abated.

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

And the waters decreased continually, until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, were the tops of the mountains seen.

And it came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the windows of the ark which he had made; and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up upon the earth.

Also

Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground. But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark: for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in unto him in the evening; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more.

And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth, and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and behold the face of the ground was dry.

And in the second month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, was the earth dried.

And God spake unto Noah saying, Go forth of the ark, thou, and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee. Bring forth with thee every living thing that is with thee of all flesh, both of fowl and of cattle, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, that they may breed abundantly in the earth, and be fruitful and multiply upon the earth.

And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him. Every beast, every creeping thing, and every fowl, and whatsoever creepeth upon the earth, after their kinds, went forth out of the ark.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Noah and his family must undoubtedly have had an entire dependance on the promises of God, or they could not have supported their long confinement.—It is agreeable to God's general dealings with the patriarchs, to suppose, that they were encouraged to this confidence by a visible token of the DIVINE PRESENCE; at least they must have had an inward assurance that God remembered them.

A miraculous power must also have been exerted to prevent the ill consequences, which would have arisen from such a number of various animals being shut up together, in so small a space, without the benefit of fresh and wholesome air.

As God vouchsafed to inform mankind by what means He occasioned the deluge, He likewise condescended to acquaint them how it was assuaged.

The word here translated *wind*, is, in the Hebrew language, the same that is translated *spirit* in the account of the creation; we may therefore understand, that the immediate power of God produced a motion in the air, which acted upon the waters as at the first division of them, and regarded the welfare of Noah, and those who were with him: both the increase and return of the waters were gradual, which prevented the ark from being tossed about so as to endanger its safety. At length the ark rested, but Noah

and

and his family seem to have had no impatience to be set at liberty; for we do not find, that they even took a survey of the earth, till a considerable time after the resting of the ark: when Noah opened the window and sent forth a raven, which continued to seek food and rest in the ark, till the waters were dried up, though it made frequent excursions abroad. The dove, being of a more gentle and tender nature, and not finding what she stood in need of abroad, quickly sought refuge in her late asylum.

It is strongly implied, that Noah regularly observed the Sabbath; for we find, that he repeatedly sent forth the dove on the seventh day, as if in expectation of some extraordinary blessing on his religious services. At length she returned, bearing in her mouth an *olive branch*, as a divine signal of peace and favour. On the succeeding Sabbath she returned not, but impelled by that instinctive power, which guides the feathered race, found an habitation among the new-sprung branches.

Noah acting, as we may suppose, by divine direction, removed the covering of the ark, and had the happiness once more to behold dry land. Still he did not attempt to leave the ark, but waited for God's command, which being given, he instantly obeyed, and left his confinement, followed by his family and every living creature he had taken in with him, excepting the dove, which, as the harbinger of peace, was made the first inhabitant of the renovated world.

What transports of delight must have arisen in the hearts of human kind, when they came out from the ark, and beheld again the beauties of nature! and how greatly must the different animals have enjoyed the restoration of the fields and pastures, and other accommodations suited to their respective natures!

It is not unusual with scoffers to make the history of the deluge a subject for ridicule. In order to guard our minds

from their objections, we should remember, that it is a very great absurdity to attempt to explain *miraculous events* by *natural causes*; because on such occasions the usual operations of nature are suspended or diverted. The belief of the omnipotence of God reconciles all difficulties; and on proper reflection it will appear as credible, that He should destroy, and renew the world, as that He should at first create it. Let us, then, turn a deaf ear to those idle speculatists, who call in question what is recorded in the Book of Truth, and corroborated by the concurring testimony of the most antient traditions. And let us learn, from the relation of God's goodness in preserving man and other living creatures, to rely on his mercy in the midst of the greatest dangers that befall us.

S E C T. X.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

AND Noah builded an altar unto the LORD, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings upon the altar.

And the LORD said, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; neither will I smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.

And the fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl
of

of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered.

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall you not eat.

And surely your blood of your lives will I require: at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

And you, be ye fruitful, and multiply, bring forth abundantly in the earth, and multiply therein.

And God spake unto Noah and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold I establish my covenant, with you, and with your seed after you;

And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you, from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

And God said, this is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations.

56 THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth.

And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.

And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

And the sons of Noah that went forth of the ark were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may judge that it was an essential part of religion to offer sacrifices to the LORD GOD, by Noah's having recourse to them immediately after he left the Ark; and we may conclude, from the expression *The LORD smelled a sweet savour*, which is a figurative mode of speaking, that they were acceptable.

When Adam was first created and placed in Eden, he had several blessings and privileges conferred on him by God; these were forfeited by the fall; but we here find those very blessings restored to human-kind in Noah and his posterity, *Be fruitful and multiply, &c.* *

* Compare Gen. i. 28. with the passage under consideration.

It is impossible to ascertain the exact state of the earth from the fall to the flood; but we have great reason to suppose, that it required much harder labour to cultivate it, than at present, especially before man was assisted by beasts. Labour is in fact no longer a curse upon mankind in general; many men are totally exempted from it; and those who toil the hardest, are not subjected to it through the natural condition of the ground, but from other accidental circumstances, and are usually eased from the worst part of it, by instruments of husbandry, and the aid of horses, oxen, &c.—Thorns and thistles indeed it still produces, but not in such abundance as to be a plague; on the contrary, they may now be ranked among the blessings of the earth, since they add to the beauties of nature, and afford delicious food for birds and beasts, nay, are often the means of restoring health to mankind when employed in medicines, or converted into milk, of the ass in particular. The case was very different in respect to Adam, supposing him to have been placed in a part of the earth over-run with these plants. It must have been a very laborious task to clear the ground from them with his own hands only, or the feeble assistance of Eve.

What the curse actually was, we may with great probability collect from that denounced against Israel when disobedient, *I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: and your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits* *. GOD's promise of regular seasons after the flood seems to intimate that they were very irregular and confused before †. We may therefore reasonably conclude, that the state of the earth is better since the deluge; of this, at least, we may be certain, that GOD has been faithful to his promise, which He made to

* Lev. xxvi. 19. 20.

† See this subject fully handled in Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

Noah,—for though floods and famines have been occasionally sent as judgments on wicked nations, they have never been general, so as to cut off every living thing from the face of the earth.

In addition to the privileges bestowed upon Adam, mankind had now that of eating flesh, with this restriction, that they should take care that every creature was totally dead, before they began dressing it for food.

It is remarked that those beasts, which feed on living creatures, are particularly fierce; and it is likely, that the same practice would render man ferocious. There was a time when the lion, the wolf, and the tyger, *eat grass with the ox.** How sanguinary are they now! We may therefore consider it as an instance of Divine mercy to us, that man was forbidden to feast himself with the blood of those animals, he was permitted to kill.

A positive command was at this time given against murder, and a law established for the punishment of that dreadful crime.—This law is agreeable to right reason, and is still in force in all civilized nations.

Though GOD permitted mankind to kill animals for food, he did not give them a licence to be cruel, or leave them at liberty to extirpate any entire species; on the contrary, the ALMIGHTY took in every class of living creatures when He made the covenant, which is recorded in this section†, in order to convince Noah, and all future generations, that the mercy of the LORD is over all his works, and that every living creature, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth, is as much in its kind the object of his loving-kindness as man.

* And GOD said, to every *beast* of the earth I have given every green herb for meat. See SECTION I.

† See Dr. Primatt's Dissertation on the Duty of Mercy, and Sin of Cruelty to Brute Animals.

It has been a question whether rainbows were seen before the flood?—Most likely they were, but no object in nature could be so proper for a *Token of the Covenant*, which GOD made at this time, because it is the effect of rain; and therefore we cannot wonder that His wisdom should select it for this purpose.

From this section, we learn, that it is an acceptable act, in the sight of GOD, to return public thanksgivings, for extraordinary deliverances.

We also learn to adore the SUPREME BEING for his mercy and goodness in pronouncing a blessing on the earth, through which we ourselves enjoy such invaluable benefits, and which are entailed on our latest posterity.

We are likewise admonished to be thankful to GOD for restraining mankind, by a Divine law, from killing each other, and for giving us dominion over the brute creation, and implanting in their nature such a fear and dread of us, as renders those beasts subservient to many useful purposes, who, from their make, are able to vanquish and destroy us.—But we should never forget, that they are of consequence enough to be taken into covenant with GOD, and consequently entitled to our regard; therefore so far from inflicting wanton cruelties on them, we should make it our study to render their lives as comfortable as possible.

Let us then imprint on our minds the EVERLASTING COVENANT, that whenever the TOKEN of it appears in the clouds, we may recollect it with gratitude, as it relates to mankind in general, and ourselves in particular; never forgetting that *God's mercy is over all his works*, and that it is our duty to be merciful to the utmost of our power.

By the conclusion of this section, we learn, that every individual of the millions of human beings who now overspread the earth, originally descended from one or other of the sons of Noah.

S E C T. XI.

NOAH'S DEATH.

AND Noah began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard. And he drank of the wine, and was drunken, and he was uncovered within his tent.

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw his uncovered father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered their father ; and their faces were backward.

And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan ; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.

And he said, Blessed be the LORD GOD of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant.

GOD shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem ; and Canaan shall be his servant.

And Noah lived after the flood three hundred and fifty years. And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years : and he died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Noah was the first who planted a vineyard, and made wine, it is highly probable that he might be overcome by the liquor, before he knew, or was fully apprised of, its intoxicating quality.

The

The behaviour of his youngest son was inexcusable; for it is a very great crime to expose and ridicule the errors of a parent. Filial duty requires children to do every thing in their power to conceal from the observation of others the infirmities of those, to whom they are so much indebted.

No wonder that Noah was offended; but we are not to regard the curse he denounced against Ham, or the blessings he pronounced on Shem and Japheth, as the result of his own wishes.—His words are evidently *prophetic*, and related to the *posterities* of his sons, (and have been amply fulfilled, as will be shewn in the course of this history) but it is likely, that Noah might be inspired to utter these predictions, at this time in particular, as a punishment from the LORD, to one son for disobedience, and as a reward to the others for their filial piety.—It certainly must have been a great mortification to Ham, to know that his descendants would be slaves;---it was an immediate degradation of himself, because it lessened his consequence in the world. Japheth, on the other hand, was proportionably exalted; and doubtless had great pleasure in hearing, that his offspring would be so prosperous: and shews, in the blessing of them, what must have been the happiness of Shem, when he found that the LORD was, in a peculiar manner, to be *his* GOD! The event has shewn, that this part of Noah's prediction referred to the *promised seed of the woman*; and it is supposed that, as Noah was *heir to the righteousness which is by faith*, he was honoured with the privilege of *bequeathing* the inheritance of the spiritual, as well as temporal blessings, which were promised to the human race.

Noah had lived to see the temporal curse removed from the earth; and in the revelation made to him by GOD in this prediction, he had hopes given him that there would be a final deliverance from it.*

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

Noah seems to have been blessed with long life, as a reward for his fidelity to GOD. We do not read of any man after him that lived to so great an age.—The flood happened 1656 years after the creation of the world, and 2349 years before the birth of CHRIST. The space of time from the creation to the flood is called the first age of the world.—From Noah's example, mankind are instructed to avoid indulging themselves to excess in drinking strong liquors; for no one can tell what sins or follies they may commit, when they deprive themselves of the use of their reason.

As we shall have frequent occasion to speak of prophecies, it is necessary, before we proceed any farther, to explain what is prophecy.

The great CREATOR knows all things, past, present, and to come; and can make known to others whatsoever he pleases. That mankind might know every thing which was necessary to encourage them to do their duty, and trust in Him, He revealed to them, at different times, a number of events, which were to happen at distant periods.

There is in the bible what may justly be stiled a *chain of prophecy* relating to the SAVIOUR of the world; the first of these was spoken by the LORD Himself, and has been already noticed, viz. That by which Adam and Eve were comforted after the fall*, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*. This served to convey to our first parents a general hope and expectation of pardon and restoration, and kept them from despair, by affording grounds for trust and confidence in God, without which religion cannot be supported in the world. In this prophecy, all the sons of Adam have an interest, and to this the administrations of Providence have in all ages had a relation, and shall have, 'till the end of all things brings with it the appointed time for its full accomplishment.

* See Section 3.

To this prophecy, GOD's promise to Noah of establishing His covenant with him evidently referred*.

But the LORD did not always declare His predictions Himself; He appointed an order of men to be His instruments, who successively delivered many prophecies. These persons were inspired by GOD, and spake not the dictates of reason, but the very words which GOD's *Holy Spirit* suggested. Lamech, the father of Noah, is supposed to have been under this Divine influence, when he predicted that his son would be a comfort to the world in respect to the curse which was, at the fall, laid on the ground; he therefore was a prophet; and Noah was a prophet when he cursed Ham, and blessed Shem and Japheth. The import of his prophecy has been already pointed out.---The use and intent of prophecy seems to have been, to keep up a constant expectation of the coming of a Redeemer, and to serve as an evidence of him, when he should appear upon earth.

In the course of this history, it will appear that there were two kinds of prophecies which may be distinguished into *local* and *general*;—the former related to the temporal concerns of particular persons or nations; the latter respected the spiritual concerns of all mankind.—The completion of the first was an earnest of the accomplishment of the other.

* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy.

S E C T. XII.

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

AND the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there.

And

And they said one to another, Go to, let us make brick, and burn them thoroughly. And they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar.

And they said, Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded. And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.

Therefore is the name of it called Babel, because the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident from this section, that many of the inhabitants of the earth had thrown off their confidence in the LORD, and trusted in their own wisdom and skill. Nothing could more effectually awaken them to a sense of His power, and

and their weakness, than the astonishing miracle that is here recorded. It was likewise calculated to teach those, who should come after them, that the schemes of ambition may be frustrated in an instant of time by ALMIGHTY power.

It seems, that the LORD visibly appeared on this occasion, and vindicated His own honour; but, according to His infinite goodness, He mingled mercy with judgment.

As mankind multiplied exceedingly fast, it would have been impossible for them all to have continued in the city of the plain of Shinar; therefore it is most likely, that those who built the city, and first dwelt there, would have driven the other inhabitants away by violent means; so this event, served not only to disappoint those, who were endeavouring to exalt themselves above the bounds which GOD prescribed them; but was, likewise, a great act of mercy in the ALMIGHTY towards succeeding generations, who would have found it more difficult to disperse, after the earth had for a long time been over-run with briars and brambles, and annoyed with wild beasts.—Then at this period, nothing could more effectually oblige them to separate, than their not being able to understand others, or to make themselves understood. It was natural that those, who could converse with each other, should wish to live together; and accordingly depart in search of a place, where they might have a quiet abode: and as there were now several languages instead of one, this occasioned the founding of different nations; and from them, as they branched out, the whole earth was in process of time overspread.

The dispersion at the Tower of Babel is supposed to have happened in the fourth generation from Shem; for it is said in Scripture, that *in the days of Pelex* (who in the genealogy holds that place) *the earth is divided*.

In the eighth generation from Shem, was Terah, who had three sons, Abram, Nahor, and Haram.

S E C T. XIII.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM. GOD'S PROMISE
RENEWED.

AND Abram and Nahor took them wives, and the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife Milcah. But Sarai had no child.

And Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go into the land of Canaan, and they came unto Haran and dwelt there. And Terah died in Haran.

Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing.

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

So Abram departed, as the LORD had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD.

And Abram journeyed, going on still towards the south. And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, this is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

And

And it came to pass, that when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman, that she was very fair. The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh : and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

And he entreated Abram well for her sake, and he had sheep and oxen, and he-asses, and men servants and maid servants, and she-asses, and camels.

And the LORD plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues, because of Sarai Abram's wife.

And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, She is my sister? So I might have taken her to me to wife: now, therefore, behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is likely, that, after the dispersion of mankind at the Tower of Babel, the LORD, as a punishment for their not humbling themselves, withdrew his *visible presence*; for we do not read of His appearing on earth again, till some generations afterwards; however, the knowledge of the true religion could not have been lost to the world, if people had been intent on serving Him in an acceptable manner: but it is conjectured, that the greatest part of the nations, into which the world was divided, instead of keeping to the religion

ligion of Noah, gradually fell into idolatry, some entirely neglecting the worship of the true God, and fancying a plurality of Gods; others corrupting the worship of Him, by practices of their own invention.

GOD was pleased to suffer these abominations to prevail for a time, perhaps, to give occasion for shewing the necessity of Divine revelation, and for displaying his wisdom and goodness; of which we should not have had such striking instances, if his power had immediately destroyed false worshippers: the LORD GOD, however, resolved to manifest himself to the world, that all men might know, when they saw his mighty acts, that he was the only GOD; for this purpose, he determined to choose for himself a peculiar people, amongst whom he would maintain his honour, and keep up the expectation of the promised SAVIOUR.

The LORD GOD, therefore, leaving the idolatrous nations to follow their wicked abominations for a season, appeared to Abram, and promised that, if he would obey his voice, he would make of him a great nation, and that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed; which last words we understand to mean, that from him should descend, at the appointed time, the SAVIOUR of the world.

This promise, which we may consider as the beginning of a new period of prophecy, was *two-fold*, relating first, to a *temporal blessing*, to be bestowed on Abram's descendants; and secondly, to a *general blessing* to be conveyed through his seed to all the nations of the earth.

Abram, without the least hesitation, immediately left his native home, journeying from place to place; and built an altar to the LORD, wherever he took up his abode, that he might fully express his faith, by offering sacrifices according to the will of the LORD; and from this time devoted himself entirely to the true GOD.

GOD's calling Abram, in the manner here related, is to be considered as an instance of His *free grace or favour* to mankind. We do not read that Abram had any claim to this distinction; but the LORD knew that he would be faithful, and set a worthy example to the world; and the Scriptures teach us to regard Abram as a pattern of faith and obedience. In the first instance, he is exhibited to us as ready to follow the light of *Divine revelation**. No sooner did GOD appear to him, and require him to leave his native country, than he obeyed, and went out, not knowing the place of his destination.—His ultimate hopes were fixed on a city, whose builder and maker is GOD†; and therefore he was not anxious about the concerns of this fluctuating world.—Christians are taught to direct their hopes to the same heavenly country; but without the aid of Divine revelation to direct them, they cannot find the way to it.—Happily for them, the *same* LORD, who was a guide to Abram, is ready to be their guide also. He must not indeed be expected to appear to us as He did to Abram, nor is there occasion for Him to do so, because those purposes of Divine providence, for which the LORD so particularly directed this good patriarch, have been completed; and the way to the heavenly country is exactly described in his *written word*; let us therefore study it with the utmost attention, and pay a ready obedience to those Divine commands which it contains, not suffering our worldly interest to attach us too strongly to the concerns of this transitory life.

It is supposed that Terah left Ur, because the people of Chaldea were so great idolaters, as entirely to neglect the worship of the true GOD, who was still adored by most nations of the earth, though, instead of honouring the LORD, they made to themselves *images* or *representations* of Him.

As Abram was no more than 75 years old, when he left Haran, Sarah, who was the daughter of his youngest brother, must have been a young woman.

* See Heb. xi. 8. 9.

† Ibid. 10.

By what means the LORD directed Abraham to Canaan, is not related; but we may conjecture, with great probability, that the patriarch was guided by some visible token of the Divine presence, as his descendants were afterwards.

We find that Abram, after the LORD had called him, followed the religion of Noah;---built altars to the LORD, acknowledged Him to be GOD, and offered sacrifices to Him alone. The calling of Abram [may be considered as a kindness to the posterity of Shem, to whom the LORD had promised, by Noah, to be a GOD, in a peculiar manner*.

It is evident, from this chapter, that the knowledge of the LORD was not yet lost by the Egyptians; but they had corrupted their ways; for it certainly was an immoral and unjust action, contrary to the law of hospitality (which seems to have been greatly observed in those days) to take a woman, especially a foreigner, against her inclination, into the house of the King, with a view, as it appears, of making her his wife.—We can scarcely imagine, that Sarah, who was affectionately attached to her husband, left him willingly.

Abram's extraordinary conduct in calling Sarai, his *sister*, will be explained in a following section.

* See Section 10.

S E C T. XIV.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM CONTINUED.

GOD'S PROMISES AGAIN RENEWED.

AND Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the south. And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.

And

And he went on his journeys from the south, even to Beth-el, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Beth-el and Hai, unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD.

And Lot also, which went with Abram, had flocks and herds, and tents. And the land was not able to bear them, that they might dwell together: for their substance was great, so that they could not dwell together.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle, and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite, and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen: for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take to the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom.

But the men of Sodom were wicked, and finners before the LORD exceedingly.

And the LORD said unto Abram after that Lot was separated from him, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward.

For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth; so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered:

Arise, walk through the land in the length of it, and in the breadth of it: for I will give it unto thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The friendly and courteous behaviour of Abram to Lot, is worthy of remark: if all relations were as ready to accommodate each other, there would be more peace and harmony, than are at present to be found in the world.

The inhabitants of Canaan were not immediately driven away to make room for Abram; but from this time he had a right to consider the land as his property: however, he was contented with such a portion of it, as was sufficient for the maintenance of himself and his dependants; but it

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was

was, without doubt, very comfortable to him to receive from the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the world, a grant of country sufficient for the sustenance of the numerous posterity which was promised to him.

S E C T. XV.

ABRAM'S COVENANT WITH ABIMELECH.

AND Abram journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar. And Abram said of Sarah his wife, she is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah.

But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken: for she is a man's wife. And Abimelech said, LORD, wilt thou slay also a righteous nation?

Said he not unto me, she is my sister? and she, even she herself said, he is my brother: in the integrity of my heart, and innocency of my hands, have I done this.

And GOD said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me.

Now therefore, restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt

shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine.

Therefore Abimelech rose early in the morning, and called all his servants, and told all these things in their ears: and the men were sore afraid.

Then Abimelech called Abram, and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me, and on my kingdom, a great sin? thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done.

And Abimelech said unto Abram, What sawest thou, that thou hast done this thing? And Abram said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake.

And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother: and she became my wife.

And it came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, he is my brother.

And Abimelech took sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and women-servants, and gave them unto Abram, and restored him Sarah his wife. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before thee: dwell where it pleaseth thee.

And unto Sarah he said, Behold, I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he

is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and with all other : thus she was reprov'd.

So Abram prayed unto the LORD for Abimelech and his wife, and his servants, and the LORD heard him.

And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech, and Phichol the chief captain of his host, spake unto Abram, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest.

Now therefore, swear unto me here by God, that thou wilt not deal falsely with me, nor with my son, nor with my son's son : but according to the kindness that I have done unto thee thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourn'd.

And Abram said, I will swear. And Abram reprov'd Abimelech because of a well of water, which Abimelech's servants had violently taken away.

And Abimelech said, I wot not who hath done this thing : neither didst thou tell me, neither yet heard I of it but to-day. And Abram took sheep and oxen, and gave them unto Abimelech : and both of them made a covenant. And Abram set seven ewe-lambs of the flock by themselves.

And Abimelech said unto Abram, What mean these seven ewe-lambs which thou hast set by themselves ? And he said, for these seven ewe-lambs shalt thou take of my hand, that they may be a witness unto me that I have digg'd this well.

Wherefore

Wherefore he called that place Beersheba; because there they sware both of them. Thus they made a covenant at Beersheba; and Abram planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting GOD. And Abram sojourned in the Philistines land many days.

Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The events, which are here related, seem to belong to an early part of Abram's history; but it is impossible to ascertain their exact period; nor is it of material consequence to do so, (as our present business is not with the *chronology*, but the *practical instruction* of the old testament) or many reasons might be produced to shew, that in the bible they are not related in their natural order. Perhaps the sacred historian might have some motive respecting the *Jews*, for this arrangement; but there can no ill consequences ensue to Christians from transpositions of this nature; and therefore we will consider these circumstances as happening while Abram and Sarai were young.—The Philistines were a people originally descended from Misraim, the son of

It is evident that Abimelech was on the whole a pious man, for he feared the LORD, and abhorred the crime of adultery, so that he would not take away another man's wife; though, according to a wicked custom which prevailed in the world at that time, he did not scruple to have a plurality of wives.

It also appears that the LORD did not limit *Divine revelation* to Abraham only; for both Pharoah and Abimelech were acquainted by means of it, that they were in danger of com-

mitting a trespass, that would, according to the dispensation they lived under, bring a heavy judgment on their kingdoms.

We may further infer from this section, that the *grace of God* was not yet withdrawn from all the nations of the earth, for Abimelech was prevented by it from perpetrating a crime, which he would otherwise have committed.—The *method of Divine grace* is likewise explained.—God did not lay an absolute restraint on the *will* of Abimelech, but represented to him the sinfulness of the action, and the punishment that would follow the commission of it.

By Abraham's being appointed to pray for Abimelech, we may understand, that the patriarch had been made acquainted with the *pure worship of God*, and knew how to address Him without superstitious rites, which it is more than probable, the Philistines used at that time.

Abimelech's expostulation with Abram had great justice in it; and Abram's apology was by no means a good one; but as we do not find that he practised this kind of deception afterwards, we may conclude he was convinced that he had acted upon false principles.

The interposition of the LORD in favour of Abram, struck the mind of Abimelech in a very forcible manner; and so far from attempting to drive him out of his country, he sought his friendship.—The rebuke which Abimelech gave to Sarah, intimates that she made a greater display of her beauty than was proper for a married woman. The sum he presented her with to buy a veil amounted to about 57l. of our money. The covenant which Abram entered into with this king, is a farther proof that Abimelech was a pious man, which justifies Abram for making an alliance with him. His giving him a consideration for the well intimates that the grant of the land of the Philistines had not been given by God to Abram as an inheritance.

The

The grove which Abram planted was to serve the purpose of a temple or church; here in all probability the good patriarch assembled his family to pay adoration to the LORD, the EVERLASTING GOD. In future ages, when the Temple was built, grove worship was forbidden. Since we have here an instance of the LORD's abhorrence of the crime of adultery, it should serve as a general admonition against coveting other men's wives.—The efficacy of *Divine revelation* in Abimelech's case, should lead all, who are tempted to commit this crime, to the same source.—The will of the LORD may now be as clearly known from the holy scriptures, as if GOD revealed it in dreams and visions; and those, who are, by means of Divine revelation, restrained from it, should be thankful to GOD for the grace He has afforded.

If the crimes of Kings are likely to bring punishments on their subjects, those who have a virtuous Sovereign, are bound in *policy*, as well as *duty*, to pray for the continuance of his life; and if adultery is among those vices which bring national judgments on a guilty land, every subject should avoid the practice of it; and those who have actually committed it, must seek for pardon through a *mediator*, for they can obtain pardon and grace no other way.

Evasions approach so near to falsehood, that they must be displeasing to a GOD of perfect *truth*; and we may understand from the dangers and difficulties to which they exposed Abram and his wife, that the incidents relating to his behaviour in Egypt and Philistia, are recorded as *warnings*, not as *examples* to the world.

Before we proceed, it will be proper to observe, that sacred history sets before us the faults and failings, as well as the virtues of particular people. That part of each person's character in which they are chiefly worthy of imitation, is plainly pointed out, and their general behaviour described in such a manner, that we may easily form a judgment of the propriety and impropriety of their conduct. *Divine revela-*

tion does not perform the office of *human reason*, but kindly assists it in matters beyond the reach of its power; and therefore, whenever the scriptures do not pass that censure upon the bad actions of those whose history it relates, which they appear to deserve, it is because the *Spirit of God* does nothing in vain.

S E C T. XVI.

ABRAM RESCUES LOT, AND PAYS TITHES TO
MELCHISEDEK.

AND there was war between Cherdelaomer king of Elan, and his confederates, and Bera king of Sodom, and his confederates.

And the vale of Siddim was full of slime pits; and the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountains.

And they took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way. And they took Lot, Abram's brother's son (who dwelt in Sodom) and his goods, and departed.

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born
in

in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus. And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him (after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him) at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

And Melchisedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

And the King of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.

And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoe-latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Alishcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We read in a former section, that the descendants of the sons of Noah overspread the whole earth. Many ages passed, before all parts of the world were inhabited; but mankind must have increased very fast, or there could not have been such a number of kings, as we read of in Abram's time. These monarchs had no great extent of territory, each reigned over one city and its suburbs.

As it has been questioned, how those continents came to be peopled, which are widely separated from the parts first inhabited after the flood, it will be proper to mention, that, though all the great quarters of the world are, for the most part, separated from each other by some vast extensive ocean, yet there is always some place where an isthmus, or small neck of land, is found to conjoin them, or some narrow sea is made to distinguish and divide them; and there is great reason to suppose, though it has not yet been discovered, that there may possibly be a small neck of land, by means of which some of the descendants of Noah passed into America.

We find, by the account here given of Abram's rescuing Lot, that he was a man of consequence in the estimation of his contemporaries. It is supposed, that the king of Sodom, who came to meet Abram, was the son of him who fell at the slime-pits. Abram's refusal of the booty shewed, that he did not engage in the war from avaricious motives, but entirely from that principle of humanity and affection, which ought to actuate every one towards the unfortunate, especially if they should chance to be relations.

It has been a matter of great dispute, who Melchizedek, king of Salem, was, to whom Abram paid tithes. The Apostle St. Paul has written largely on the subject*, and

* Heb. 7.

made it (as I think) evidently appear, that he was no less than the LORD himself, who, while mankind continued innocent, might justly be regarded in his government of them, as *King of Righteousness*; and afterwards as *King of Peace and Reconciliation* for them, as sinners.—But in the full discussion of this point, it would be proper to employ the Apostle's arguments, which will appear in a much clearer light with the rest of the doctrines of the Old Testament, it will therefore be best to pass it over at present.

The practical instruction to be collected from this section is, that it is our duty to go to the assistance of friends, whenever we can render them essential service; that in all deliverances from our enemies, we are to ascribe glory to God; and that, if we should discover who the King of Righteousness and Peace is, and should find that he is ready to meet all there, who, like Abram, believe and trust in the *most high God possessor of heaven and earth*, we are under an indispensable obligation to pay homage to Him, as it is He alone who can convey a Divine blessing to us.

S E C T. XVII.

THE TEMPORAL COVENANT.

AFTER these things, the WORD of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

And Abram said, LORD GOD what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezar of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold to me thou hast given no seed: and lo! one born in my house is mine heir.

And behold the WORD of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir. And HE brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now towards heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And HE said unto him, so shall thy seed be.

And Abram believed in the LORD, and he counted it to Him for righteousness.

And the WORD of the LORD said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it.

And he said, LORD GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?

And the WORD of the LORD said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon.

And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another, but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him.

And the LORD said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

And

And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterwards they shall come out with great substance.

But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

And it came to pass, that when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces.

In that same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.

The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Gergashites, and the Jebusites.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In this chapter, we read, that the WORD of the LORD came unto Abram.—We are taught by the scriptures of the New Testament, and, indeed, by a succeeding verse in this section, that the WORD of the LORD is another title appropriated by the LORD GOD. The purpose of this vision seems to have been to strengthen Abram's faith by additional promises. It had been revealed to Abram before, that his descendants should be very numerous and prosperous, but as he had no present prospect of an heir, his hope might have failed, had not GOD thus graciously condescended to encourage it.

It is said that *Abram believed in the LORD, and he counted it to him for righteousness*; that is to say, he believed that the LORD was GOD, that He had power to do all things, and was ever faithful to his promises. On account of this faith, GOD, in his own great mercy, forgave him all the former offences he had committed against Him, when he did not worship Him according to his Holy Will, and regarded him as a righteous or just person, fit to be taken into covenant with Him; and even condescended to confirm this covenant after the custom of men; for in antient times, it was usual in solemn contracts to divide animals in the manner here described, and for the parties to pass between them.* In the performance of this ceremony, Abram's faith was farther exercised, for he seems to have watched a long time waiting for the LORD's coming to ratify the covenant †.

The sleep which fell upon Abram was from the LORD.—The horror which attended it was figurative of the misery of his descendants; and that part of prophecy at this time revealed, concerning the Egyptian bondage, was designed, without doubt, as a future evidence of the foreknowledge of GOD; and that part of it which pronounced deliverance, was intended as a comfort and encouragement, to be kept in reserve for his posterity, when they should be under the calamities that are here predicted.

From the promise to Abram, that he should *go to his father's in peace*, it has been inferred, that there is a place to which the souls of the deceased go, where they find those of their relations and friends.

* See Jer. xxxiv. 18, 19.

† It is to be observed, that Abram was justified (or esteemed just) by *faith*, before any express law was given him. This circumstance (as we read in the Epistles) furnished the Apostles with many arguments in favour of the Gentiles, against the Jewish nation; for it plainly shews, that the works of the Mosaic law were not necessary for justification to all sorts of people.

From

From the expression, *the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*, we may understand, that it is the course of Divine Providence to spare wicked nations, so as not entirely to extirpate them. We also learn, that they can no longer be suffered to remain, without bringing an imputation on the justice of God.

The smoking furnace, and burning lamp, were tokens of the covenant which God at this time made with Abram concerning the *temporal* state of his descendants.

We read in a former section,* that the LORD promised Abram to give to him (as an inheritance for the numerous generations that were to proceed from him) all the land which he could at that time behold, and commanded him to take a particular survey of it, we find, by this section, that he afterwards settled, and dwelt in the plain of Mamre. It is therefore most likely, as we have already supposed, that he removed from place to place, and in this peregrination, abode in Egypt and Philistia, by which means he had opportunity to examine the state and extent of the country.

In this section, we find the LORD fulfilling his promise, by actually giving this land to Abram's posterity.

The nations, whose right of inheritance is here transferred to the seed of Abram, were descendants of Canaan, the son of Ham. They were at that time wicked idolaters, and afterwards became most daring and presumptuous sinners.

We learn from this section, to consider God as the Supreme Governor of the universe, portioning out the earth, and transferring the inheritance of its different territories from age to age, according to his good pleasure.—This should teach every nation to endeavour to obtain His favour, rather than confide in their own strength. He is as a shield, defending from dangers *all* those who place their trust in Him; and a rewarder of those who diligently serve Him; for He is no respecter of persons.

The nature and efficacy of Abraham's faith, is explained by the Apostolic writings; and from them, we also learn,

* See Section 13.

that

that by the *seed of Abraham*, we are to understand, not merely those who were his natural descendants, but also those who believe in the LORD like him. — St. John the Baptist confirms this doctrine *

* Matth. iii. 9.

S E C T. XVIII.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAM CONTINUED. THE BIRTH OF ISHMAEL.

NOW Sarai, Abram's wife, bare him no children: and she had an hand-maid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

And Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram, to be his wife. And her mistress was despised in her eyes.

And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee; for I have given my maid into thy bosom, and now I am despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

And

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou shalt bear a son, and thou shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou GOD see'st me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael.

And Abram was fourscore and six years old when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Hagar appears to have been guilty of a fault in using her mistress with disrespect; but Sarai should not have resented it with so much severity.

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The promise here made to Hagar is a remarkable prophecy, which is at this very time fulfilling in the world, as will be explained in its proper place.

It is said that the *ANGEL of the LORD* found her, &c.—From this expression, some interpreters have been led to suppose that it was a *created Angel*, but in this very section, we are told the contrary. So far was Hagar from entertaining this idea, that she addressed the LORD who spoke unto her as GOD; we may therefore conclude, that the term *ANGEL of the LORD* is synonymous with the *IMAGE of GOD*, and applicable to the *DEITY* alone.

The only practical lesson which presents itself in this section, is, that it is the duty of servants to submit to their mistresses, even if the latter carry their displeasure to an unreasonable height; and that it is much wiser to do so, than to expose themselves to difficulties and distresses through pride and resentment.

S E C T. XIX.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT.—CIRCUMCISION APPOINTED.

AND when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the ALMIGHTY GOD; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.

And Abram fell on his face: and GOD talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations.

tions. Neither shall thy name be called any more Abram ; but thy name shall be Abraham ; for a father of many nations have I made thee.

And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of thee ; and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an EVERLASTING COVENANT ; to be a GOD unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession ; and I will be their GOD.

And GOD said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations.

This is my covenant, which ye shall keep between me, and you, and thy seed after thee : Every male-child amongst you shall be circumcised. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised : and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

And it shall be a token of the covenant between me and you. And the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people : he hath broken my covenant.

And GOD said unto Abraham, as for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall

shall her name be. And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her.

Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?

And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee!

And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

And as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly; twelve princes shall proceed from him; and I will make him a great nation.

But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shalt bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.

And He left off talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.

And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised them, in the self-same day as God had said unto him.

And

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT. 93

And Abraham was ninety years old and nine, when he was circumcised. And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In a former section, we read of a *Temporal Covenant*, which the LORD GOD made with Abram; we here find the LORD appearing unto this patriarch again, in order to make a *General and Everlasting Covenant* with him, or rather to confirm that at first made with Adam and Eve, and afterwards established to Noah, and from him transferred to Shem, from whom Abram descended.

Abram was himself well convinced, that the LORD was the ALMIGHTY GOD; but the DEITY foresaw, that persons in succeeding generations would form erroneous opinions concerning Him; and for this reason (as we may presume) expressly declared, that he was going to enter into covenant with Abram in his OWN PERSON.

It was required of Abram, that he should be *perfect*, that is to say, entirely devoted to ALMIGHTY GOD, forsaking all manner of false worship.

We have reason to suppose, that, at this time, the DIVINE IMAGE was manifested with resplendent glory, for Abram fell on his face in humble adoration.

It is observable, that after having repeated the promises of the former covenant, and changed Abram's name to Abraham, which was more grand and honourable*. The LORD graciously proceeded to establish the covenant, and extend it to spiritual blessings, for so we may understand the expression,—*I will be a GOD to thee, and to thy seed after*

* Abram signifies High Father;—Abraham, Father of a great Multitude.

thee. It was yet a long time before Abram's race could be multiplied to so great a degree, as is here promised; and many generations would successively pass away, before the heathen nations were to be driven out; we may therefore conclude, that Abraham looked (as the Apostle to the Hebrews expresses it) *For a better country, that is an heavenly. Wherefore GOD called himself their GOD, having prepared for them a city in his eternal kingdom**.

This is the first passage of Scripture, in which the LORD is stiled the *GOD of Abraham*; it will therefore be proper to consider what construction may be put on this expression. The text just quoted, implies, that it meant something more than the favour of GOD in this life, to the patriarch and his seed; and our SAVIOUR, in his discourse with the Sadducees†, intimates very strongly, that it has a reference to a future state. Whether Abraham had any expectation of a resurrection from the dead, is not expressly told us; but it is certain, that he believed the power of GOD to be equal to the bringing about such an event.

Having promised such great and extensive privileges to Abraham and his posterity, GOD next proceeded to appoint a rite, by which they should be distinguished as his peculiar people. This rite was to serve as a *token* of their faith and obedience: it consisted in making a mark in their flesh.

That Sarai might have an equal dignity with her husband, her name was also changed ‡.

The good old Patriarch, pleased with the thoughts that Sarah would partake the honour intended for him, could not restrain his joy; but recollecting that he had already a

* Heb. xi. 16.

† Luke xx. 37, 38.

‡ Sarai signifies a Princess; Sarah, a Princess or Mother of many nations. In those early ages, the heads of families had the supreme command over their descendants and domestics; therefore, they were properly called Princes and Princesses.

son, parental affection pleaded in his heart in favour of him, and burst from his lips in the fervent wish—*O that Ishmael might live before Thee!*

To reconcile Abraham's mind to the disappointment of supplanting Ishmael, GOD graciously promised, that he also should be very prosperous, and possess both riches and honour; one distinction was however reserved for him, who was yet unborn, namely, the blessing which related to *the promised seed of the woman*.

It will be proper to remark here, that the particular person among Abraham's numerous posterity, to whom the distinguishing inheritance was to descend, was fixed by the sovereign will of GOD, and not left to Abraham's pleasure to determine*. The LORD reserved to Himself the privilege of determining, what *nation* should be His *peculiar people*.

From this section we are instructed to acknowledge the LORD to be also the ALMIGHTY GOD; therefore, let us on no account degrade Him in our minds, but humble ourselves before Him, with thanksgivings for His merciful condescension in making a covenant with Abraham, in which, as we may understand from the New Testament, all shall have an interest, who, like Abraham, *believe in the LORD, call on His Holy name*, and obey those commands, which He has made known by Divine revelation.

The rite of *circumcision* is now abolished; but we have *baptism* in its stead, which is the token and pledge of a covenant conveying better promises.—If it was necessary for Abraham, his family, and descendants, to comply with the first, it must be our indispensable duty to comply with the latter. And as infants were to be initiated into the one, it is a natural inference, that they should be partakers of the other. Can they too early in life be numbered amongst GOD's peculiar people, possessing the pledge of His Divine promises?

* Rom. ix. 7, 8.

S E C T. XX.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM CONTINUED.

AND the LORD appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day.

And he lift up his eyes, and looked, and lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground.

And said, My LORD, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant.—Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree:

And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said.

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it.

And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

And

And they said unto him, Where is Sarah, thy wife? And he said, Behold in the tent.

And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and Sarah, thy wife, shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent-door, which was behind them.

Now Abraham and Sarah were old, and well stricken in years: therefore Sarah laughed within herself.

And the LORD said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old?

Is any thing too hard for the LORD? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.

Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay, but thou didst laugh.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

On this occasion, the appearance of the LORD GOD was different from that *manifestation of the Divine Presence*, which Abraham had been accustomed to behold. And the LORD was attended by two Angels; but both the Divine and Angelic natures were veiled under the human form, so that Abraham at first supposed he saw three travellers; and, with great hospitality, hastened to invite them into his tent; and, observing in the appearance of one of them, uncommon dignity, he addressed himself to him with the utmost humility and respect, regarding the others as his inferiors.

The purpose of this visit, in respect to Abraham, was, that the LORD might name the exact time when Isaac should be born; and it is remarkable, that the LORD made this promise, in the presence of two of His holy angels, calling them as witnesses to add to the solemnity of his engagement.

Sarah, who had never known of any person's having children when so far advanced in life as she and her husband were, and not knowing (as we may suppose) that it was the LORD Himself that promised to send them a son, could not at first believe such an event to be possible; but it pleased the LORD to strengthen her faith, by an assurance, that nothing was too hard for Him to bring to pass; and her heart paid a ready assent to this important truth.—Terrified lest the LORD (as He now appeared to be) should take offence at her presumption, Sarah committed another fault, by uttering a falsehood. The LORD knew that this was not premeditated, and no more than the effect of human weakness suddenly feeling the consciousness of sin, and having no time for recollection; He therefore took pity on her infirmity; and, instead of punishing her, gently informed her, that her most secret actions were known to His omniscience, leaving her own heart to reproach her at leisure, for the sins she had committed.

From this passage of sacred history, we are instructed, that hospitality to strangers is very pleasing in the sight of God. It is needless to expatiate on the benevolence which displayed itself in Abraham's solicitude, to afford his guests all possible refreshment. In that early age of the world, there were no inns; and, therefore, these supposed travellers, had they been men, would have suffered great inconveniencies, from walking in the heat of the day, if they could not have gained admittance into some family. The present state of the world does not require an exact imitation of Abraham's and Sarah's conduct on this occasion; but it shews their characters in a most amiable light; and should incline every one to indulge the

the same sentiments as actuated them, which will produce a regard to the necessities of strangers, and an inclination to assist them with every reasonable accommodation.——We cannot expect the LORD personally to visit us in the manner He did Abraham and Sarah; because (as has been before observed) we live under a different dispensation; but the LORD has assured us in the Holy Scriptures, that if we comfort and refresh the weary traveller, *for his sake*, He will esteem it an instance of kindness done to Himself, and recompence it accordingly.*—A cup of cold water only, given to a stranger, may bring a blessing to ourselves; therefore, when we behold a fellow creature exposed to the scorching heat, or the pinching cold, without the means of refreshment, let us call to mind the love that is due to our LORD, and extend it to those whom he condescends to appoint as his deputies and representatives to receive it.

The Apostle, Peter, admonishes wives to take example from Sarah, who, we are told, *honoured her husband, calling him Lord*.——This admonition makes part of the marriage ceremony among Christians; and, therefore, concerns every woman who enters into the state of wedlock; for, having solemnly promised to obey, like Sarah, they cannot, without breaking a covenant entered into in the presence of GOD, exalt themselves above their Lords, and refuse that subordination which GOD originally appointed, when the woman was made as an help-meet for man.

Matth. x. 42.

S E C T. XXI.

ABRAHAM INTERCEDETH FOR SODOM.

AND the men rose up from thence, and looked towards Sodom: and Abraham went with them, to bring them on the way.

And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went towards Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

Perad-



Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous shall be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, which am but dust and ashes.

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there? And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, O let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak, Peradventure there shall be thirty found there? And he said, I will not do it if I find thirty there.

And he said, behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the LORD, peradventure there shall be twenty found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, O let not the LORD be angry, and I will speak yet but this once; Peradventure there shall

be ten found there? And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And the LORD went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham, and Abraham returned unto his place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having condescended to accept of Abraham's hospitality*, the LORD from henceforth regarded him as His Friend†. He knew him to be one who had a sincere love for Him, who was ready to obey his commands in all things, and who would educate his children, and instruct his dependants, in the same pious principles; therefore being about to bring such a destruction upon two neighbouring kingdoms, as might strike Abraham's mind with consternation and fear, for the safety of himself and family, and occasion him to flee from the neighbourhood, and perhaps stagger his faith so far as it related to His infinite mercy; the LORD resolved to make him acquainted with the determination of his justice in respect to Sodom.

The angelic beings, who accompanied the LORD, were mis-
sioned for a purpose which will be related in the next section.

It may be observed, that the scourge of war had been sent upon Sodom and Gomorrah without producing any amendment. And it is also to be remarked, that the LORD does not appoint deputies under him, and trust to their representations concerning what is done in the world, but examines himself into the conduct of human beings, as may be known from this instance, as well as from the Fall, the Flood, and the confusion of languages.

* See Section 20.

† 2 Chron. ch. xx. 7. Isaiah xli. 8. James ii. 23.

As soon as Abraham understood that the LORD designed to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, he availed himself of the Divine Favour that was shewed to him, and interceded for these devoted cities. From the gracious manner in which his intercession was received, it is evident that his benevolence was well pleasing to the LORD, and would have been effectual, had not the measure of their iniquity been full.—To what a pitch of wickedness must their inhabitants have arrived, if it did not furnish even ten *righteous* persons: that is to say, ten who believed in the *true* GOD, obeyed his will to the best of their knowledge, and shewed justice and mercy to their fellow creatures!

It appeared to Abraham (who had, as we may suppose, no time to consider the subject) inconsistent with Divine justice that the righteous should suffer with the wicked; and supposing that there were no future state of retribution, it certainly would be so. In the present case, however, GOD was fully justified in destroying all the inhabitants of Sodom, even upon Abraham's principle; and as we pursue the history, we shall find His dealings with other wicked nations, equally reconcileable with *perfect mercy*, as well as *perfect justice*; we may therefore be certain, that, in every national visitation, the *Judge of all the earth* doeth right.—If the righteous must, from the nature of the visitation, perish with the wicked, GOD can, and doubtless will, recompense them in a future state.

The intimation which GOD vouchsafed to give Abraham, of his intention to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, was calculated also to answer the general purpose of informing future generations of mankind through him, that such awful calamities as the destruction of whole cities, are not to be ascribed to *mere chance*, or *natural causes*, (as infidels term it). The ways of the SUPREME BEING are *uniform*, founded upon motives of the exactest rectitude; therefore, what He expressly *professed* to do, when He *visibly manifested*

His DIVINE PRESENCE on earth, we may reasonably suppose Him to do now, *secretly* and *invisibly*.

How pleasing is it to reflect, that the LORD should make his ways known, and honour human kind so much as to converse with Abraham as one friend does with another!—How much more comfortable to be assured, that the same Divine Being regards all true Christians in the same endearing relation!—Thus, saith the DIVINE FRIEND of Abraham to us, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.—Henceforth I call you not Servants, but Friends.—These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

As Abraham therefore embraced the advantage which the favour of GOD afforded him, to intercede for Sodom and Gomorrah, let us in like manner pray for all nations, particularly for our own, beseeching GOD, of His infinite goodness, to avert His impending judgments, if it is consistent with His justice so to do.—And since we are encouraged from His discourse with Abraham, and from other passages of Scripture, to think, that He sometimes spareth a city for the sake of the righteous that are in it; let us endeavour to encrease the number of these, by a careful regard to our own *faith* and *practice*, and the diligent instruction of our children and families, that we may obtain the *friendship* of the LORD GOD. And if, after all our supplications, we see his judgments in the world; nay, even if we suffer by them ourselves, let us acquiesce in Abraham's sentiment, that *the Judge of all the earth doeth right*, on which we may build a confident hope, that what is a punishment to the wicked, will ultimately prove a blessing to the righteous.

It is plain from the expression *the LORD went his way after he had done talking with Abraham*, that this was no visionary scene, but a real transaction.

S E C T. XXII.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND
GOMORRAH.

AND there came two Angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing them, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, unto your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways.

And they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house: and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.

But before they lay down, the men of Sodom compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter. And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where are those men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us.

And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, and said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly.

And they said, Stand back. And they said again, This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will

needs be a judge: Now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed fore upon the man, even upon Lot, and came near to break the door.

But the Angels put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they smote the men that were at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

And the Angels said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? Sons in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD: and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get ye out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked, unto his sons in law.

And when the morning arose, then the Angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here, lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city.

And while he lingered, the Angels laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him: and they brought him forth, and set him without the city. And

And it came to pass, that when they had brought them forth abroad, that HE said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed.

And Lot said unto him, Oh! not so my LORD. Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life: and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me and I die.

Behold now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one: Oh let me escape thither, is it not a little one? and my soul shall live.

And He said unto him, see I have accepted thee concerning this thing also, that I will not overthrow this city, for the which thou hast spoken. Haste thee, escape thither, for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither. Therefore the name of the city was called Zoar. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.

Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven: and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

But Lot's wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham gat up early in the morning, to the place where he stood before the LORD. And he

looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and behold, and lo the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.

And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in the which Lot dwelt.

And Lot went up out of Zoar, and dwelt in the mountain, and his two daughters with him, for he feared to dwell in Zoar, and he dwelt in a cave, he and his two daughters.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From comparing this section with the foregoing one, we may know, that the Angels who came to Lot were the same who had accompanied the LORD to Abraham's tent.

Of the nature and office of Angels, we can form no perfect conception; for they are invisible to us at present; our ideas of them must be collected from the Scriptures, which acquaint us, that, in comparison of the LORD GOD, they are imperfect beings*; that they are appointed as guardians to good men†; that they conduct departed souls to paradise‡; that they desire the welfare of mankind§; and will, at the last day, be employed in separating the wicked from the good. We are also taught, that Angels are not to be worshipped||.

* Job. iv. 18. Matt. xxiv. 36. Heb. i. 4, 18.

† Ps. lci. 11. Matt. xviii. 10. Heb. i. 14.

‡ Luke xvi. 22. § Luke ii. 14. xv. 10.

|| Rev. xix, 10. xxii. 8, 9.

Lot, as well as Abraham, supposed, from the form in which the Angels appeared, that they were men; and he was equally ready to shew courtesy to them, which they (purposely, as we may suppose) gave him an opportunity of doing, that the goodness of GOD might be vindicated, in saving a man, who utterly disclaimed the crimes, which brought Divine judgments on the natives of the place*.

So great was the licentiousness of the inhabitants of Sodom, and its environs, that the weary traveller could not be invited to take refreshment in a private house, without subjecting him to the insults of a rude rabble. All that Lot could do towards protecting the strangers that came in to lodge with him, was, to expose himself and family to the outrages of his wicked neighbours, which he did without hesitation. His heavenly guests, who were sent to save them, delivered him out of their hands, and punished their impious adversaries as their crimes deserved.

Sodom, and the cities and country connected with it, were notorious for many sins. The prophet Ezekiel informs us †, that their iniquity consisted in pride, luxury, idleness, and want of charity to the poor. That the inhabitants were haughty, and abominable for the most detestable vices, and there was no good practiced by them.

It seems, that Lot did not make such expedition to depart, as the exigency of the case required. Perhaps he was solicitous to preserve his goods; but his angelic friends hastened him and his family away, and conducted them safely out of the city: here the commission of the heavenly messengers ended; for we find it said in the next verse, that “when *they* had brought them forth abroad, HE said, escape for thy life, &c. ;” and by Lot’s answer it is evident, that the LORD manifested HIMSELF to him, and received

* 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.

† Ezek. xvi. 49, &c.

that prayer, which would have been very improperly addressed to the *Angels*.

We are not to suppose, from the expression, “ I cannot do any thing, &c.” that God’s power was limited. It refers to His merciful intention of saving Lot and his family, on which account alone He suspended the execution of the judgment He had resolved to bring upon the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

It is mentioned, that *the sun was risen upon the earth*. In all probability, this bright luminary shone with its usual lustre, and gilded the mountains and plains with its cheerful rays, while the luxurious and careless inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah either reposed on their soft beds, or pursued with ardor their worldly affairs, without paying their early adorations to the God who made them.—In a moment, the firmament melted with fervent heat, and a shower of fire and brimstone poured down on their devoted heads, burning up and destroying whatever grew on the surface of the ground, and rendering the earth, from that time forth, unfit for culture or habitation * !—From this instance we learn, that the element of fire, as well as that of water, is entirely under the government of Divine Providence, and may be rendered either an inestimable blessing, or a most distressing evil.

The sin of Lot’s wife was, as the Scripture informs us, *Infidelity* †. Probably she did not believe that what had been revealed to her would come to pass. The judgment inflicted upon her was a most exemplary one, and remained for many ages *a monument of an unbelieving soul*. Josephus, a learned Jewish historian, says, that the Pillar of Salt was to be seen in his days. Interpreters tell us, that it did not consist of common salt, but of a metallic substance, such as

* Deut. xxix. 23. Isa. xlii. 19. Jer. l. 40.

† Wisd. x. 7.

was hewn out of rocks, like marble, with which it was usual to build houses *.

When Abraham, with anxious solicitude, repaired early in the morning to the place where he had the preceding day stood before the LORD, how greatly must his humane heart have been affected with the awful sight which he beheld! Yet he arraigned not the justice of the LORD. He now understood, that nations are but as drops in the bucket, when He cometh to take vengeance on the wicked.

The circumstances of the calamity not reaching Abraham, and of Lot's deliverance, are particularly pointed out by the Sacred Historian, and strongly intimate, that the whole transaction was directed by an over-ruling Providence.

Much practical instruction may be collected from the section before us.

In the first place we learn from it, and the passages of Scripture referred to, to be thankful to God for making known to us the ministry of Angels; and we may look forward with an increase of pleasure to a state, where, instead of being received with jealousy and envy, as innovating strangers, we shall find a set of benevolent friends, who have been accustomed to interest themselves in the welfare of mankind, and who will rejoice in our exaltation to as great a share of blessedness as they themselves enjoy.

We are also here taught another lesson of good-nature and hospitality.

We have likewise an additional instance of the interposition of Divine Providence, which shews, that the LORD, though He employs Angels as His ministers, does not abandon the human race to the government of imperfect beings; but is himself the SUPREME DISPOSER of all events.

From the command given to Lot to escape, we are admonished, that it is better to leave our worldly possessions be-

* See Essay for a new Translation of the Bible.

hind, than to stay and perish with the wicked.—We also learn, that we ought not to lead careless lives, from a dependance that nature will pursue a regular course of causes and effects. What is *nature* but the work of God? He therefore can instantly change the courses of the different elements, and send them as punishments on a guilty land, whenever he sees fit.

Since the Holy Scriptures point out so particularly the crimes for which Sodom and Gomorrah were condemned to destruction, we should make it our study to avoid them.

Our LORD has admonished us to *Remember Lot's wife**; we should, therefore, of all things, avoid *Infidelity*; for if we are in no danger of being turned into pillars of salt, as warnings to mankind, a more dreadful fate awaits us—that of being *salted with fire*†.—Let us then imitate the faith and obedience of Lot, whose history, we are told, is written for our admonition‡; and, in so doing, let us repose our souls on the mercy and goodness of GOD, who will give His holy Angels charge to keep us in all our ways.

* Luke xvii. 32. † Mark ix. 49. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 6. Jude 7.

S E C T. XXIII.

THE HISTORY OF ABRAHAM CONTINUED, THE BIRTH OF ISAAC.

AND the LORD visited Sarah as he had said; for Sarah bare Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time God had spoken to him.

And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare to him, Isaac.

And

And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac, being eight days old, as GOD had commanded him.

And Abraham was an hundred years old, when his son Isaac was born unto him. And Sarah said, GOD hath made me to rejoyce, so that all that hear will rejoyce with me.

And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have borne him a son in his old age.

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had borne unto Abraham, mocking.

Wherefore she said unto Abraham, cast out this bond-woman, and her son: for the son of this bond-woman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight, because of his son.

And GOD said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight, because of the lad, and because of thy bond-woman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice: for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bond-woman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar (putting it on her shoulder) and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

And

And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him, a good way off, as it were a bow-shot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

And GOD heard the voice of the lad: and the angel of GOD called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for GOD hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand: for I will make him a great nation.

And GOD opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink.

And GOD was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

At length after many years of expectation, Abraham and Sarah were blessed in the birth of that son, who was designed by GOD, to be heir of the promises, respecting both the land of Canaan, and the *Everlasting Covenant*; and we are informed, that this joyful event happened at the exact time which the LORD had foretold; and that Abraham, in obedience to the Divine command, named the child Isaac. The great age of the Patriarch, and his wife, rendered his birth marvellous.

It

It appears that Sarah did not consign her son to the care of an hireling, but was a nurse to him herself.

Sarah's severity in respect to Ishmael, appears very illiberal; but we have reason to think Ishmael behaved in a very provoking manner; and that his mother encouraged him to do so; in all probability, envy and jealousy possessed their minds.—Thus circumstanced, had the parties continued to live under the same roof, family harmony could not have subsisted; the LORD, therefore, in mercy to *them all*, permitted the dismissal of those who pretended to be rivals to Sarah, and her son.

If Ishmael had continued to live in Canaan, he would, in all probability, after Abraham's death, have contested the inheritance with Isaac; and, by this means, would have lost the chance of becoming a great nation in another country; and we cannot suppose, that GOD would have suffered him to obtain the inheritance which he designed for Isaac.

We may easily conceive, that Abraham's distress was very great; and, had not the LORD commanded him to yield to Sarah, there is reason to think he would have made an earnest opposition to her request, which would have given rise to domestic bickerings, subversive of peace and good order; neither could he have had the satisfaction of seeing Ishmael, in the way of becoming a mighty nation.—The good Patriarch considered himself as called upon to give a fresh instance of his faith in the Divine promises; and, therefore, without hesitation, dismissed a son, tenderly beloved, and a woman who had an undoubted right to his kindness.

It is said, that Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away with no other provision than a *little bread* and a *bottle of water*.—He knew that the *providence of GOD* was infinitely better than the most ample portion he could bestow, and did not presume to invade the province, which the LORD had graciously taken upon *Himself*.

It

It seems as if Hagar had forgotten the promise which had been made to her before the birth of her son, or that would have kept her mind from despondency.

Ishmael, though famishing with thirst, remembered the lessons of piety he had learned from his father, and called upon the LORD, who never faileth to help those who apply to Him in the time of their distress.

Hagar was gently admonished to have confidence in GOD; and, as a reward for her maternal tenderness, was made instrumental to her son's recovery.

Who the ANGEL OF THE LORD was, has been explained in a former section*.

We find that in a short time Ishmael (who, when he left his father's house, was 16 or 17 years old) made so good use of his bow and arrows, that, under the providence of GOD, he gained a comfortable support for himself and mother.—Game was at that time very plentiful; and it is likely, that, being so expert an archer, Ishmael was able to shoot a sufficient quantity to exchange with his neighbours, for other necessities. It is supposed that he made himself lord of the place where he fixed his abode; and that he was in no kind of necessity, or he would not have married, because the maintaining a wife would only have increased his distress, if he met with difficulties in providing for himself alone.

From this section, we learn to confide in the promises of GOD.—Many there are recorded in the Holy Scriptures, in which we *all* have an interest; and we may depend upon it, the expectations they are designed to raise, will not be disappointed, if, like Abraham and Sarah, we fulfil the conditions required on our part, which are comprized in *faith* and *obedience*.

No part of Scripture is written in vain; we may therefore justly infer, from the mention of Sarah's being a nurse to Isaac, that this endearing office is a part of the maternal duty.

* See Section 18.

The misfortune that befel Ishmael should be a lesson to *young people*, not to give way to impertinence, especially towards those on whom they depend for maintenance and support.

Abraham's acquiescence with the Divine will, instructs parents to submit to the dispensations of providence, in cases where there is a necessity for sending their children to seek their fortune in the world.—Many persons, like Ishmael, (though from different causes) are obliged to shift with a very small portion; and it is often astonishing to see their success in life; but as miraculous interposition is not now to be expected, parents should do their utmost towards providing for all their offspring, and then trust them to the protection of Heaven; but above all, it should be their care to season the minds of children with early piety, that in the day of distress, when they may chance to be exposed to perils, by land or by sea, and far distant from their native home, they may implore for themselves, the aid of the LORD, and, like Ishmael, be heard.

Mothers are admonished, by this portion of Scripture, not to fall into despondency, as soon as they see a child in danger, as relief is often nearer at hand than they are apt to imagine; and mankind in general may understand from it, that what appear to be ruinous misfortunes, may in the end prove the foundations of prosperity and happiness.

S E C T. XXIV.

ABRAHAM OFFERETH HIS SON ISAAC.

AND it came to pass after these things, that GOD did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham, and he said, behold here I am.

And He said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land
of

of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son; and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day Abraham lift up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide you here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife: and they went both of them together.

And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering: so they went both of them together.

And they came to the place which God had told him of: and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order; and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the Angel of the
LORD

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LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham : and he said, Here am I.

And he said, Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns : and Abraham went and took the ram, and Abraham offered him up for a burnt offering, in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireth: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

And the Angel of the LORD called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son :

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

So Abraham returned unto his young men, and they rose up and went together to Beer-sheba ; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is said, that "God did *tempt* Abraham," by which we are to understand no more than that He *tried* him; for it appears from the sequel, that the LORD had no design of leading him into sin. GOD cannot be tempted to do evil, neither doth at any time tempt men, in this sense of the word *.

The mountain, on which Abraham was ordered to offer his son Isaac, was certainly the same on which the Temple of Solomon was afterwards built, and on part of which CHRIST suffered.

A greater trial could not have been proposed for any human being, than to desire an affectionate father to sacrifice, as beasts were sacrificed, a son, in whom the hopes of his family's becoming a great nation were centered; yet we find Abraham, with the utmost composure, making every requisite preparation for this purpose.

The good patriarch had so long been accustomed to trust in GOD, that faith in the Divine promises was become a settled habit, a fixed principle in his nature. The repeated assurances, which the LORD had given him, that in *Isaac* his seed should be called, left him no room to fear that he should eventually be deprived of him. It is impossible to tell what passed in Abraham's mind while he pursued his journey; but there is reason to think, from what he said to his young men, and from his answer to Isaac, that *Faith* produced *Hope*, and that he regarded GOD's command as a *trial*, not as a *temptation*.

When arrived at the place to which he was directed to go, he saw no lamb provided, as he seems to have expected.—The command of the LORD was express,—*Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a*

* Jam. i. 13, 14.

burnt sacrifice. A painful conflict, no doubt, arose in Abraham's bosom. There were a thousand considerations to deter him from killing his son. How could he bear to part with his darling child? What would his poor afflicted mother say? In what light would the world regard this inhuman action? And what would become of the hopes of a numerous seed, if the branch that was to produce them should be cut off by his own unnatural hand? In opposition to these weighty reasons, the promises of God presented themselves to his mind, with a thankful remembrance of the numberless blessings that had been conferred on him.—Could he disobey such a gracious Being? Gratitude forbade this.—Did he not know, that the power of God was infinite? Could he then dare to offend Him? He had at first received Isaac as a gift from God, out of the common course of nature? Who could tell, but that the LORD might design to shew forth his power, by raising his son from the dead? At all events, it was his indispensable duty to *obey*; for, besides the natural claim which the CREATOR has to the obedience of his creatures, Abraham had entered into a solemn covenant to serve the LORD with a *perfect heart*; he therefore determined to fulfil the Divine will, trusting to the infinite mercy of God to save him from the miseries that threatened him. Animated by piety, and supported by the hope, that his son, who was now devoted to God, would be given to him again, *even from the dead**, he forbore to expostulate, or to entreat the LORD to alter his Divine purposes, but took the knife in his hand, and lifted up his arm to give the fatal stroke. This was regarded by God as an evident proof that his faith was an *active principle*; not resting in the inward belief of his own mind, but ready to shew itself to the world in such *works* as were necessary to prove his fear of God, and reliance on those

* Heb. xi. 17, 18, 19.

Divine promises, which had been vouchsafed to him.—The purpose was now fully answered, for which the Divine command had been given; and the LORD shewed, that he was far from wishing for the death of Isaac, by desiring Abraham not to do any thing unto him.

What a transport of joy must this good man feel, when he heard the Angel of the LORD calling to him, and saw a ram (agreeably to the *wishes*, and perhaps the *prayers*, of his heart) ready to supply on the altar the place of his dear son! And how must his joy have been redoubled, when the *invisible* GOD, in an audible voice, speaking by His Angel or Image, confirmed in heaven, with an oath, the promises He had before made on earth, that they might endure when this perishing world should be no more. We cannot suppose, that the *Angel of the LORD*, who called to Abraham, was a *created being*; for why should GOD, who had repeatedly conversed with Abraham in His own *Divine Person*, on this occasion alone, employ a *ministering spirit*?—To prevent his thinking so, Abraham was assured, that HE, who now spake, was the same GOD who had commanded him to offer up his son;—the same LORD he had been accustomed to hold converse with:—still manifesting the DEITY to his outward senses, though with more solemnity than He had ever done before.

The Apostle to the Hebrews confirms the opinion, that it was the SUPREME BEING who took this oath; for he says, *because GOD could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself. Willing more abundantly to shew to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, He confirmed it by an oath: that, by two immutable things, (viz. His PROMISE and His OATH) those who fled for refuge to the hope set before them, might have a strong consolation* *.

It is to be observed, that GOD pledged Himself by this oath to make good His promises, not only to Abraham and

* Heb. vi. 17, 18.

his own immediate posterity, but *to all the nations of the earth.*

It has been a question in dispute, whether Isaac was consenting to the offering which his father made. Most likely he was; for, according to his age, which is supposed to have been at least 24 or 25 years, he must have been more powerful and active than so old a man as Abraham, and could easily have wrested the sacrificial knife from his hand, or prevented his binding him by fleeing away; and it appears, that there was as good an understanding betwixt him and his father afterwards, as before.

From the example of Abraham we learn, that *faith* is not complete without *works of obedience*; and that it is our duty to submit, without murmuring, to all the dispensations of God. None of us will be called to so severe a trial as Abraham was:—we shall not be required to offer up our sons as burnt-offerings; but God may see fit to take our children to himself, and deprive us of them. In this case let us call to mind the *Divine promises*, which teach Christians to look forward with joyful expectation to a resurrection from the dead, when all who, like Abraham, have *believed and obeyed*, will, as *his seed*, be blessed with immortal life and everlasting happiness.

S E C T. XXV.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF SARAH.

AND Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and

Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto them, Hear us, my lord; thou art a mighty prince amongst us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron the son of Zoar: that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field; for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me, for a possession of a burying-place amongst you.

And Ephron dwelled among the children of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gates of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: the field give I thee, and the cave that is therein,

therein, I give it thee ; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee : bury thy dead.

And Abraham bowed down himself before the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee hear me : I will give thee money for the field ; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there.

And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me : the land is worth four hundred shekels of silver ; what is that betwixt me and thee ? bury therefore thy dead.

And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron, and Abraham weighed Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.

And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gates of his city.

And after this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah, before Mamre : the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan.

And the field and the cave that is therein were made sure unto Abraham, for a possession of a burying-place, by the sons of Heth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this section, that Abraham understood the promises which God had made him of the whole land of Canaan, as relating to a distant period of time; and therefore did not attempt to seize on any part that was in the possession of others, but was contented with the liberty he enjoyed of living quietly as a *stranger* and *sojourner*, changing his abode occasionally, as the exigencies of his affairs required. On the other hand, the people of the land regarded him as a person of distinction and consequence, particularly favoured by the God of heaven and earth*.

The gates of cities in those days, and for many ages after, were the places of judicature and public resort. Here the governors and elders of cities went to hear complaints, and administer justice, make conveyances and titles of estates, &c. So that Abraham could not have made his purchase, without going to the city gates.

The silver which Abraham paid for the purchase of the field and the cave, amounted to about sixty pounds of our money.

The history of this transaction between Abraham and the people of Heth, affords a pleasing example of politeness and hospitality, generosity and justice.

Sarah lived to a good old age, and had the happiness of seeing her son Isaac grown to man's estate; and it appears, that Abraham was sensibly affected with her loss, for it is said he came to mourn for her; and it appears, that he was very solicitous to procure a sepulchre, that her remains might not be removed by the natives of the place.

* See Gen. xxi. 22.

S E C T. XXVI.

MARRIAGE OF ABRAHAM WITH KETURAH.

THEN again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah; and Keturah bare him six sons, Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shunah.

And the sons of Jokshan were Sheba and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Ashurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. And the sons of Midian, Ephah, and Epher, and Hanock, and Abidah, and Eldaah; all these were the family of Keturah.

And unto these sons which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, (while he yet lived) east-ward, unto the east-country.

Now these are the generations of Ishmael, Abraham's son, whom Hagar the Egyptian, Sarah's handmaid, bare unto Abraham: And these are the names of the sons of Ishmael, by their names, according to their generations: the first-born of Ishmael, Nebajoth; and Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, and Mishma, and Dumah, and Massa, Hader, and Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah: these are the sons of Ishmael, and these are their names, by their towns, and by their castles; twelve princes according to their nations; and they dwelt from Havilah unto Shur, that is before Egypt, in the way to Assyria.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Who Keturah was, whom Abraham married, is not known; but, without doubt, if she had ever been an idolater, she was not so when he took her as his wife.

It had been predicted by the LORD, that Abraham should be the father of many nations, and he lived to see the sons and grandsons, from whom they were to proceed, grow up; and so considerable were his possessions, that he was enabled to give them all portions, without any injury to his son Isaac. They settled comfortably in different places, and multiplied and prospered exceedingly. In time, each family became a nation, and their descendants branched out into other nations: so that all the generations could not be numbered individually by human art, any more than the dust of the earth, the sand on the sea shore, or the stars in the firmament*.

Ishmael, in particular, was successful to a remarkable degree; and had, as the LORD promised, twelve sons, who became princes, and confederated together, so as to form a great nation.

This wonderful prosperity was doubtless considered by Abraham as the completion of that part of the *Temporal Covenant*, which related to himself, and was an earnest of the completion of the *Everlasting Covenant*. In this sense we should regard this passage of Sacred History, and learn from it to place a strong confidence in the promises of God†, respecting this covenant, made known to us in His holy word, but which still remain to be fulfilled.

The other branches of Shem's family increased also, as did the posterity of Japhet and Ham. Those descended from Canaan, as we observed before, were the idolatrous nations, whose land was given as an inheritance to the descendants of Abraham.

* Gen. xlii. 16. xv. 5. xxii. 17. † Gen. xviii. 19.

S E C T. XXVII.

THE MARRIAGE OF ISAAC WITH REBEKAH.

AND Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.

And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:

And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, amongst whom I dwell:

But thou shalt go into my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.

And the servant said unto him, Peradventure the woman will not be willing to follow me unto this land: must I needs bring thy son again unto the land from whence thou camest?

And Abraham said unto him, Beware thou, that thou bring not my son thither again.

The LORD GOD of heaven, which took me from my father's house, and from the land of my kindred, and which spake unto me, and that sware unto me, saying, Unto thy seed will I give this land; he shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from thence.

And if the woman will not be willing to follow thee, then thou shalt be clear from this my oath: only bring not my son thither again. And the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and sware to him concerning that matter.

And the servant took ten camels, of the camels of his master, and departed; (for all the goods of his master were in his hand) and he arose and went to Mesopotamia, unto the city of Nahor.

And he made his camels to kneel down without the city, by a well of water, at the time of the evening, even the time that women go out to draw water.

And he said, O LORD GOD of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham:

And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know, that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master.

And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that behold Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon; and she went down to the well and filled her pitcher, and came up.

And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she

she said, drink, my lord: and she hastened and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink.

And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking.

And she hastened, and emptied her pitcher into the trough, and ran again unto the well to draw water, and drew for all his camels.

And the man wondering at her, held his peace, to wit, Whether the LORD had made his journey prosperous or not.

And it came to pass, as the camels had done drinking, that the man took a golden ear-ring of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, of ten shekels weight of gold; and said, Whose daughter art thou? tell me, I pray thee: is there room in thy father's house for us to lodge in?

And she said unto him, I am the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Milcah, which she bare unto Nahor. We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in.

And the man bowed down his head, and worshipped the LORD. And he said, Blessed be the LORD GOD of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren.

And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house, these things. And Rebekah had a brother,

ther, and his name was Laban: and Laban ran out unto the man, unto the well.

And it came to pass when he saw the ear-ring and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, saying, Thus spake the man unto me; that he came unto the man, and behold, he stood by the camels at the well.

And he said, Come in, thou blessed of the LORD; wherefore standest thou without? for I have prepared the house, and room for the camels. And the man came into the house: and Laban ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him.

And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And Laban said, Speak on.

And the steward said, I am Abraham's servant.

And the LORD hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and men-servants, and maid-servants, and camels, and asses.

And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath.

And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son.

And

And I said unto my master, Peradventure the woman will not follow me. And he said unto me, the LORD before whom I walk, will send his angel with thee, and prosper thy way; and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred, and of my father's house:

Then shalt thou be clear from this my oath, when thou comest to my kindred; and if they give not thee one, thou shalt be clear from my oath.

And I came this day unto the well, and said, O LORD GOD of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:

Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink;

And she said to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the LORD hath appointed out for my master's son.

And before I had done speaking in mine heart, behold Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, Let me drink, I pray thee.

And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bare unto him: and I put
the

the ear-ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.

And I bowed down my head, and worshipped the LORD, and blessed the LORD GOD of my master Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son.

And now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.

Then Laban and Bethuel answered and said, The thing proceedeth from the LORD: we cannot speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as the LORD hath spoken.

And it came to pass, that when Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshiped the LORD, bowing himself to the earth.

And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things.

And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night: and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master.

And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go. And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the LORD hath prospered my way; send me away, that I may go to my master.

And

And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.

And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them.

And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi, for he dwelt in the south country. And he went out to meditate in the field at the even tide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold the camels were coming.

And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel; for she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail and covered herself.

And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her, and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nahor very probably either removed with his father Terah (as Abraham did) from Ur, in Chaldea, and settled at Haran, in Mesopotamia, or not long after followed them thither.—We find that the promises of GOD, as far as they related to Abraham's personal prosperity and happiness, were abundantly fulfilled; for he was blessed in *all things*, and had as full enjoyment of the land of Canaan, as his circumstances would admit of: the entire possession of the country, would have been an incumbrance to him, and disadvantageous to his posterity, for he could not have peopled it all, and the parts unoccupied would have been over-run with wild beasts, and covered with briars and brambles, before his descendants could encrease into a nation.

It was very natural that Abraham should wish to see Isaac settled before he died; and as the people who surrounded him were idolaters, he certainly would have been very unhappy had Isaac made an intimate alliance with them, especially as it had been revealed to Abraham, that their impiety would provoke the LORD to cut them off at last.

It would have been an imprudent step, if Abraham had suffered his son to leave the land of Canaan, and go to the very place from whence he himself had been called by the LORD. Besides, the good Patriarch knew that in Mesopotamia, even those who adhered to the true GOD, had greatly corrupted His holy worship, and that the generality of the people were very much addicted to idolatry; in this case, Isaac would have been exposed to the danger of being drawn away from his duty, had he gone thither in search of a wife. Besides, he might have fancied some other woman in the country, instead of one of his own kindred, and by this means, have made an improper match.

Abraham.

Abraham considered that his life was very uncertain; and knowing the fidelity and discretion of Eliezar, he appointed him the guardian of his son in this momentous affair.

The oath which Abraham required his steward to take, was the most solemn one then in use.

It does not appear that Eliezar was visibly conducted by an *angel*, but it is likely that Abraham, in sending him, acted agreeably to Divine direction, and that he had received assurances from the LORD GOD *of heaven and earth*, that an extraordinary providence should attend this expedition. The readiness of Eliezar to undertake it, shews, that he was a pious good man, worthy of this important trust; and his subsequent behaviour was such as might justly be expected from a person trained in Abraham's house. The prayer Eliezar offered, was exactly suited to the occasion, which was so difficult a one, that without some sign from the LORD, he would have been utterly at a loss how to proceed, for he was not acquainted with a single person in the country; and had he opened his business to strangers, he would have been in great danger of imposition.

In those days, they had not contrivances for conveying water from place to place by pipes; nor indeed would it have been worth their while to be at the trouble and expence of making them, because they frequently changed their situation; they were therefore obliged to have public wells, and water their flocks at stated times, when all the young women used to attend, it being a part of their business to look after the sheep. This was the occasion that brought Rebekah to the place where Eliezar had his first interview with her.

It is evident from his thanksgiving at the well, and the relation he gave of the sentiments which successively arose in his mind, that Eliezar perceived the providence of GOD disposing all events for the accomplishment of the business he was employed in. And we may also judge, from the ready concurrence

rence of Rebekah and her friends, that they were of the same opinion.

There is one particular in Rebekah's conduct, which shews her character in a very pleasing light; that is her humanity to the camels*. When she went to the well, and beheld the poor weary beasts, though she knew not to whom they belonged, she was moved with compassion towards them, and offered, without the least sollicitation, to draw water for them *all*. This was a very laborious employment for a young woman to undertake, considering that camels are very large creatures that drink water in great abundance, which is to serve them for long travel in dry deserts, and Rebekah had no less than ten of them to satisfy; yet she performed her promise, and drew for them *all*. Her brother Laban likewise was so attentive to the necessities of the beasts, that before he gave the men any refreshment, he ungirded the camels, and gave them provender to eat, and straw to lie down and rest on. Compassion urged him to take the first care of those creatures that could not take care of themselves.

How admirable is the fidelity of Eliezar. He would neither eat nor drink, till he had executed his commission!

The readiness of Rebekah to leave her friends, and of them to part with her, shewed a firm trust in the LORD. The blessing pronounced on her at parting, seems to allude to the *Everlasting Covenant*. This afterwards became a solemn form of benediction in the marriage ceremony among the Jews.

The marriage of Isaac appears to have taken place soon after the death of his mother.

In former sections we read, that the LORD on many occasions visibly interposed in Abraham's temporal concerns. We find in this portion of Scripture a wonderful concur-

* Dr. Primett's Dissertation.

rence of circumstances, that could scarcely have happened by chance. Abraham's servant was not favoured with a *visible manifestation of the DEITY*, yet he clearly discerned the hand of Providence in the occurrences which befel him, and acknowledged with thankfulness the goodness of the LORD.

By his example, we are instructed to ascribe our success and prosperity in the affairs of this life, to the merciful guidance and direction of an over-ruling Providence; for what the LORD did for Eliezar, He still continues to do for all who put their trust in Him. *A man's heart* (says Solomon*) *deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps.*

It is to be observed, that Eliezar did not throw himself entirely upon *Providence*: in the first place he solemnly resolved to do what his duty required; he then employed those means for the accomplishment of his purpose, which human reason would in that case naturally suggest (providing himself with such a retinue and presents, as were likely to procure him credit and attention); and having done this, he prayed to the LORD GOD to dispose those contingencies, which were not in his own power. Let us in every important affair pursue the like method; and if our wishes are crowned with success, let us not pride ourselves in the wisdom of our own contrivances, but, with humility and thankfulness, acknowledge the goodness of the SUPREME DIRECTOR *of all events.*

* Prov. xvi. 9.

S E C T. XXVIII.

THE BIRTH OF ESAU AND JACOB.

AND Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban the Syrian.

And Isaac intreated the LORD for his wife, because she had no children; and the LORD was intreated of him. And Rebekah went to enquire of the LORD, and the LORD said unto her, Two nations shall proceed from thee, and two manner of people, and the one people shall be stronger than the other, and the elder shall serve the younger. And Rebekah bare two sons, and she called the first born Esau, and the younger she called Jacob. And Isaac was threescore years old when she bare them.

And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Isaac was heir to the promises, it was very natural for him to be desirous of having a son, that he might transmit the inheritance to the next generation; however, it seems, that he waited with patient resignation for 20 years, and then
his

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his hope beginning to fail, he solemnly and earnestly entreated the LORD to grant him an increase of family.

By the expression, *Rebekah enquired of the LORD*, we may understand that GOD still continued, by *immediate revelation*, to make his will known to his chosen servants.

The prediction given to Rebekah, on this occasion, was a very remarkable one, and, from its accomplishment, will be found to relate not *personally* to the children that were to be born of her, but *nationally* to their *posterities*; and is referred to by the Apostle to the Hebrews, as a proof, that the purpose and intention of GOD, according to his own free choice, was the only rule and standard for his chusing one nation rather than another, to be his peculiar people, not any works or merit on the part of man; for this declaration was made before the persons, from whom these two nations were to proceed, were born; and therefore, before they had done good to deserve, or evil to forfeit the Divine Favour*.

As the children grew up, their genius and disposition led them to different pursuits; but there was nothing in the manners of Jacob, that indicated his future superiority to his brother; on the contrary, Esau was of an active enterprising spirit, Jacob of a quiet domestic turn.

* See Rom. ix. 10, 11, 12. See also Taylor's Paraphrase on this chapter of Romans.

S E C T. XXIX.

THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM,—THE DEATH OF
ISHMAEL.

AND these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived; an hundred three-score and fifteen years. Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age; an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people.

And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; the field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife.

And these are the years of the life of Ishmael, an hundred and thirty and seven years; and he died in the presence of all his brethren.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In providing for his other sons, Abraham had carefully reserved for Isaac all his property that was annexed to the covenant, which GOD had vouchsafed to make with him respecting the land of Canaan, a large tract of which must, by this time, have been overspread by his numerous flocks and herds. The good Patriarch took a very proper measure, in sending his other sons to settle in distant places* ;

* Section 26.

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for it was the only probable way of preventing animosities and jealousies among them.

We find, by the account that is here given us of the years of Abraham's life, that the Divine promise * respecting this particular, was faithfully fulfilled, for he lived to a *good old age*, considering that the period of man's life was greatly contracted after the Flood. It is said, that *he was gathered to his people*. This expression is synonymous with that in the prophecy, *Thou shalt go to thy fathers* †, and cannot allude to the interment of his *body*, because his fathers were buried in a distant part of the world.

It appears, that Isaac and Ishmael lived in harmony together, as they united in the pious office of giving honourable burial to their father. Neither had Ishmael any cause to envy the *temporal prosperity* of his brother, for having the advantage of being born so many years before him, his family had multiplied greatly, and was become of consequence in the world, before Isaac had any children grown up.

It is related of Ishmael, that *he died in the presence of all his brethren*. Before his birth, it was predicted of him, that *he should be a wild man; that his hand would be against every one, and every one's hand against him; and that he should DWELL in the presence of all his brethren*. We do not read of any particular contests, which Ishmael had with the other descendants of Abraham; but it may be inferred from these passages, that, having permission from GOD to dwell in a certain part of the world, he and his posterity resolutely maintained possession of it, and were blessed with success, in spite of the invasions and opposition which the natives of the adjacent countries might think fit to make, to prevent their establishment. Of the present race of Arabs, who are supposed to be the original descendants of Ishmael, it may literally be said, *that their hands have ever been*

* Gen. xv. 15.

† See Annotations to Section 17.

against

against every one, and every one's hand against them; and yet they have continued to *live in the presence of all their brethren*, for they were never wholly subdued, even by the greatest conquerors of the earth: but it appears like injustice to Ishmael and his sons, to suppose, that *they* were robbers by profession, because the present wild Arabs are so: it is much more reasonable and candid to imagine, that the pretence of seizing the property of others, as a lawful right derived from their progenitors, is a corruption of later times. The LORD would not have placed any set of people in a situation where they should be under a necessity of practising immorality; much less a son of Abraham, one on whom He had promised to bestow an extraordinary blessing. If the Ishmaelites had so large a tract of country to themselves, as the Scriptures inform us they had, there was no occasion for them to injure others, as their own territories were sufficient to afford them affluence.

Abraham lived to see the sons of Isaac fifteen years old, and Ishmael till they were 53.

Having brought the history of Abraham to a period, and seen that he was faithful to the LORD, and that the LORD was true to all his promises respecting him, let us emulate the example of the good Patriarch, that we may at length obtain the blessings.

The history of Abraham abounds with wonderful events, and exhibits the character of this good man in different points of view. We sometimes find him guilty of faults, which shew that he was subject to the infirmities of human nature; but it is proved by a variety of instances, that his faith in God's promises, and obedience to His Divine commands, were such, as justly entitle him to be called the *Father of the Faithful*; and it is this part of his character that is proposed to our imitation. Let us then emulate the example of the good Patriarch, that we may at length obtain (through the
infinite

infinite mercy of GOD) a share of the blessings provided as the rewards of faith and obedience by Him who changeth not * ; neither will he break his covenant, or alter the thing that is gone out of His mouth. The LORD hath *sworn*, and it shall come to pass ; He hath purposed, and it shall stand, that *in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.*

* Mal. iii. 6. Jam. i. 17.

S E C T. XXX.

HISTORY OF ISAAC.

AND there was a famine in the land, besides the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And the LORD appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt : dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of :

Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee : for unto thee and unto thy seed I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father :

And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven ; and will give unto thy seed all these countries : and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed :

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws : And Isaac went unto Abimelech, king of the Philistines unto Gerar :

H

And

And Abimelech the king charged his servants, saying, He that toucheth this man or his wife, shall surely be put to death.

Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundred-fold : and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great.

For he had possessions of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants : And the Philistines envied him. For all the wells which his father's servants had digged in the days of Abraham his father, the Philistines had stopp'd them, and filled them with earth.

And Abimelech said unto Isaac, Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we. And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there.

And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father ; for the Philistines had stopp'd them after the death of Abraham : and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water is ours : and he called the name of the well Eshek, because they strove with him.

And they digged another well, and strove for that also ; and he called the name of it Sitnah.

And

And he removed from thence, and digged another well, and for that they strove not : and he called the name of it Rehoboth ; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

And he went up from thence to Beer-sheba. And the LORD appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the GOD of Abraham thy father : fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham's sake.

And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there : and there Isaac's servants digged a well.

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, and Ahuzzath one of his friends, and Phicol the chief captain of his army. And Isaac said unto them, Wherefore come ye to me, seeing ye hate me, and have sent me away from you ?

And they said, We saw certainly that the LORD was with thee : and we said, Let there be now an oath betwixt us, even betwixt us and thee, and let us make a covenant with thee, that thou wilt do us no hurt, as we have not touched thee, and as we have done unto thee nothing but good, and have sent thee away in peace : thou art now the blessed of the LORD.

And he made them a feast, and they did eat and drink. And they rose up betimes in the morning, and sware one to another : and Isaac sent them away, and they departed from him in peace.

And it came to pass the same day, that Isaac's servants came and told him concerning the well which they had digged, and said unto him, We have found water. And he called it Shebah: therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Famine is reckoned among those judgements which are inflicted by GOD, to awaken wicked nations to a sense of their sins *. That which happened in the days of Isaac seems to have been designed for the punishment of the idolatrous people, and shews that they were not cut off without warnings. It appears that Isaac† was commanded by God, to go from Canaan while the famine lasted, and was directed to the land of the Philistines instead of Egypt, to which we may presume he had purposed to go. But before he departed, he was directed to consider Canaan as his home; and to dispel those fears which the famine naturally gave rise to, he was encouraged by the renewal of the Covenant, which the LORD had formerly made with Abraham; and that Isaac might understand that GOD's favour to his faithful servants is not limited to the short term of their existence in this world, He assured him, that, in granting the blessing to him, he meant to do a farther honour to Abraham, which implied that Abraham still existed.

The King of the Philistines could scarcely be the same with whom Abraham made an alliance; but it is imagined, that Abimelech was a general name for the kings of that country. Isaac inconsiderately practised the same kind of

* See Lev. xxvi. 20. Deut. xxviii. 23. Amos iv. 6.

† I have taken the liberty of making a transposition in this section, which I hope the context justifies.

evasion which Abraham had before done, by endeavouring to make his wife pass for his sister; but as this subject has already been considered *, it is omitted in this section.

Abimelech appears to have feared the LORD as well as his father.

The success which Isaac met with in the great increase of his first harvest in the land of the Philistines, and his subsequent prosperity, were proofs that the Providence of God followed him.

We cannot suppose that the family of Isaac was equal in number and power to the nation of the Philistines; the expression of Abimelech, *Thou art greater and mightier than we*, must not be understood literally, but proportionably. The wonderful increase of Isaac's substance had raised the envy of the Philistines, who murmured at seeing a foreigner more prosperous in their land than themselves.

In the valley of Gerar, Isaac had a sort of hereditary right to dwell, for a former King had granted to his father the liberty of chusing any part of the country for his residence; and this was the spot he fixed upon; and Isaac had an undoubted claim to the wells which Abraham digged, because that patriarch had actually *purchased* a title to them †. It was this consideration in all probability that chiefly influenced Isaac to open them rather than dig new ones. Beer-sheba had been consecrated by Abraham, who planted a grove there, and built an altar to the LORD. No sooner was Isaac arrived at this sacred spot, than he was honoured with a Divine vision, and a fresh ratification of the Covenant respecting temporal blessings: In gratitude for the promises vouchsafed to him, we find that he also built an altar, and resolved to abide in that place.

It seems that Abimelech feared the true God, or he would not have been so solicitous to make an alliance with Isaac,

* See section 15.

† Ibid.

merely from a conviction that he was peculiarly blessed of the LORD. It is very remarkable, that the well which Abraham named Beer-sheba, or the well of the oath, in witness of the Covenant made between him and the king of the Philistines, should be discovered to Isaac on the very day that he was in similar circumstances. It is likely that the news arrived before his royal guest had left him, and that he restored the name to do honour to his father's memory; and also that the well might, agreeably to its first destination, serve as a testimony of the covenant which he had just renewed.

The name Phicol seems to have titularly belonged to the office of chief captain of the army. Who Ahuzzath was, we are not told, but he was doubtless a person of distinction.

It is evident, from the words in which the promise at the beginning of this section was conveyed to Isaac, that the *Divine Being* who made it, was the same LORD that appeared to Abraham, and we find him in the second vision, calling himself the GOD of *Abraham*.

It is needless to expatiate further on this passage of Scripture; for after contemplating the history of Abraham, the reflections and practical instruction it is calculated to convey, will naturally arise in the mind of an attentive reader.

S E C T. XXXI.

ESAU SELLETH HIS BIRTH-RIGHT.—HE MARRIETH TWO WIVES.

AND Jacob sod pottage: and Esau came from the field, and he was faint: And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom.

And

And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birth-right.

And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?

And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he swore unto him: and he sold his birth-right unto Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birth-right.

And Esau was forty years old when he took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite: which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Esau and Jacob were twin brothers; but as Esau was the first born, he had, as we may suppose, a superiority in his father's house, and seems to have expected, as his *birth-right*, to be heir of the promises which God had made to Abraham and Isaac, one part of which was, that God *would be their God* in a peculiar manner.

Fond of the sports of the field, Esau pursued them with such ardor, that he left himself little time for considering the value of the privileges he made pretensions to, or he would not have parted with them so easily. The Apostle* to the Hebrews represents his sale of the birth-right as a *prophane* action, which it could not have been, had it related to *temporal* blessings only.

Jacob, on the other hand, seems to have had a sincere faith in the promises of God, and an urgent desire to possess the

* Hebrews xii. 16.

blessings which were promised to the seed of Abraham and Isaac. It is most likely that Rebekah had made known to Jacob, who was her darling son, what the LORD had revealed to her, before his birth, concerning the superiority which the nation that was to proceed from him, should have, over that which was to proceed from Esau.—This, however, is no excuse for Jacob; he certainly took an unjustifiable method to obtain the birth-right; and we must not consider his success in this instance, as a proof of the Divine favour; for it will appear, as we proceed, that it did not eventually advance his *personal happiness*, neither did it *procure* the blessing of Abraham for his posterity; for before he, or Esau, had done good or evil,—before they were born into the world,—the LORD had determined, that, in respect to the *nations* which should spring from them, the *elder should serve the younger**, as has been already observed in a former section.

Esau's marriage with a Canaanitish woman, was another instance of *prophaneness*; for he could not be ignorant that it was of material consequence, for those who honoured the LORD, and were designed to be His peculiar people, to avoid alliances with Idolators.

From this section, we learn, that it is very wrong to give up the mind entirely to any pursuit, to the exclusion of *religious meditation*; had Esau accustomed himself to reflect on the value of the privileges annexed to the birth-right, he would not have been so ready to relinquish the title which he supposed he had to them.—In his father's house, he could scarcely be in danger of starving; therefore, we may conclude, that he preferred the gratification of his appetite with a savory dish, to the greatest spiritual advantages.—How many people in the world, like Esau, resign the title which the *Christian covenant* gives them, to the providential care of GOD in this

* See Section 28.

world, and the hope of a heavenly inheritance in the next, for the sports of the field, and the pleasures of the table!

Jacob's fault, in taking advantage of his brother's necessity, is so obvious, that it was needless for the sacred historian to point it out to observation; for *reason* and *common sense* will enable any person to judge, that it is wrong for them to practice, what they cannot but condemn.

S E C T. XXXII.

JACOB DECEIVETH HIS FATHER.

AND it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see, he called Esau, his eldest son, and said unto him, My son: and he said unto him, Behold, here am I.

And he said, Behold now I am old; I know not the day of my death. Now therefore, take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison; and make me savoury meat, such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat: that my soul may bless thee before I die.

And Rebekah heard when Isaac spake to Esau his son: and Esau went to the field to hunt for venison, and to bring it. And Rebekah spake unto Jacob her son, saying, Behold, I heard thy father speak unto Esau thy brother, saying, Bring me venison and make me savoury meat, that I may eat, and bless thee before the LORD, before my death.

Now therefore, my son, obey my voice, according to that which I command thee; Go now to the

flock, and fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats; and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth. And thou shalt bring it to thy father, that he may eat, and that he may bless thee before his death.

And Jacob said to Rebekah his mother, Behold, Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I am a smooth man; My father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver; and I shall bring a curse upon me, and not a blessing.

And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice, and go fetch me them. And he went and fetched, and brought them to his mother: and his mother made savoury meat, such as his father loved.

And Rebekah took goodly raiment of her eldest son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them upon Jacob her younger son. And she put the skins of the kids of the goats upon his hands, and upon the smooth of his neck.

And she gave the savoury meat, and the bread, which she had prepared, into the hand of her son Jacob.

And he came unto his father, and said, My father; and he said, Here am I; who art thou, my son?

And Jacob said unto his father, I am Esau thy first born; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me.

And

And Isaac said unto his son, How is it that thou hast found it so quickly, my son? and he said, Because the LORD thy GOD brought it to me.

And Isaac said unto Jacob, Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau, or not. And Jacob went near unto Isaac his father, and he felt him, and said, The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau.

And he discerned him not, because his hands were hairy, as his brother Esau's hands: so he blessed him.

And Isaac said, Art thou my very son Esau? and he said, I am. And Isaac said, Bring it near to me, and I will eat of my son's venison, that my soul may bless thee: and he brought it near to him, and he did eat: and he brought him wine, and he drank.

And his father Isaac said unto him, Come near now, and kiss me, my son. And he came near, and kissed him: and he smelled the smell of his raiment, and blessed him, and said, See, the smell of my son is as the smell of a field, which the LORD hath blessed.

Therefore GOD give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine.

Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that bleisseth thee.

And it came to pass as soon as Isaac had made an end of blessing Jacob, and Jacob was yet scarce gone

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out from the presence of Isaac his father, that Esau his brother came in from his hunting.

And he also made savoury meat, and brought it unto his father; and said unto his father, Let my father arise, and eat of his son's venison, that thy soul may bless me.

And Isaac his father said unto him, Who art thou? and he said, I am thy son, thy first-born Esau. And Isaac trembled very exceedingly, and he said, Who? where is he that hath taken venison, and brought it me; and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him? yea, and he shall be blessed.

And when Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said unto his father, Bless me, even me also, O my father.

And Isaac said, Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing.

And Esau said, Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birth-right; and behold, now he hath taken away my blessing: and he said, Hast thou not reserved a blessing for me?

And Isaac answered and said unto Esau, Behold, I have made him thy lord, and all his brethren have I given to him for servants, and with corn and wine have I sustained him: and what shall I do now unto thee, my son?

And

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And Esau said unto his father, Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me also, O my father. And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

And Isaac his father answered, and said unto him, Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above.

And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother: and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is something so affecting in the account which is given in this section of Esau's disappointment, that the heart which can forbear to commiserate his distress must be totally destitute of sensibility;—yet, however, we may be inclined to pity *him*, and condemn *Jacob*. Esau will be found, on an impartial examination of his conduct, to have been still more culpable than his brother.—Neither of them could, indeed, justly claim the *blessing* as due to their *merits*, nor was it, as we observed before*, designed as a *reward* for any *works* of theirs, but as a *free gift* from God, to the *posterity of Abraham* in the *line of Jacob*, for purposes of mercy to *all mankind*.

But though the LORD thus pre-determined the lot of the *nations* which Jacob and Esau represented, (as the heads from whom they were to proceed), He left them as *individuals* (like the rest of the human race) to the exercise of their own *free will*, both in respect to faith and moral actions: we will therefore, for the present, suspend the farther consideration of the *Divine ordinance* in respect to the *predestination* of one people to *supremacy*, and the other to *subjection*, since we find that it

* Section 28.

was the business of an *Apostle**, not of the *Jewish historian*, to vindicate the justice of God in this particular.

Moses describes the conduct of the different parties concerned in this transaction, as merely the result of *human inclinations*, uncontrouled by *Divine power*, so far as it related to their own persons.

It will appear, in a following part of this history, that Isaac lived for a number of years after the event which is here recorded; but he found the infirmities of age encreasing upon him, and feeling a sensible decay of his faculties, it was very natural for him to fear that his end was approaching.

Esau seems to have made it one of the pleasures of his life to shew his affection for his father, by procuring venison, and dressing it for him in a manner agreeable to his palate. — Without imputing luxury to Isaac, we may conceive that he took particular delight in eating of this dish; for every parent knows, that the dutiful attention of a child can give a value to the most trifling services.

Jacob, who was naturally of a very timid disposition, observing the great ascendancy which his brother had gained over his father, attached himself, as we find, more particularly to his mother; and each parent indulged a partiality, which inclined them to promote the interest of their particular favourites. — This, in all probability, gave rise to those jealousies and animosities, which prevented the harmony that ought to subsist in all families.

Whether a decay of memory betrayed Isaac into the error, is not mentioned; but he appears to have forgot what the LORD had revealed to his wife, and resolved to give to Esau the *paternal blessing* (which appears to have been the appointed means for the conveyance of the *everlasting covenant*), and to shew that he meant to bestow the blessing on Esau, as the reward of his filial piety, he required him to bring venison, that he

* See Romans 9.

might sanctify an action which had so peculiarly endeared him to his heart, by making it a kind of *witness* or *token*, on this solemn occasion. Isaac testified a sincere faith in the Divine promises, but, in his preference of Esau, he certainly acted on a wrong principle.

Rebekah also believed in the promises, and never lost sight of the *Divine revelation* which she had been favoured with before the birth of her children.—Anxious to secure the blessing for Jacob, and supposing that she was co-operating with the will of GOD, she thought herself justified in employing artifices to obtain it.

Equally apprehensive of losing what he valued above all things, and accustomed to pay implicit obedience to his mother, Jacob thought it his duty to yield to her commands, even in opposition to the dictates of his own conscience; under this mistaken idea, he, with reiterated falsehood, deceived his aged father!

Both Rebekah and Jacob were commendable for having a due esteem for the paternal benediction; but nothing can justify their attempt to bring about the accomplishment of a Divine prophecy, by a complication of frauds; it appears, however, to have been a precipitate act, the result of inconsideration, rather than premeditated wickedness.

It is conjectured that the raiment which Jacob put on, when he went to his father, was a dress which Esau had to distinguish him as the eldest son.

The behaviour of Isaac to the supposed Esau, shews, that he meant to make him heir to the promises at first vouchsafed by the LORD to Abraham, and afterwards confirmed to himself. The words in which he pronounced the blessing, are evidently a *prophecy*, and perfectly agree with that prediction concerning the *Everlasting Covenant*, which the LORD himself had formerly declared *.

* Genesis xvii. 8.

Isaac was certainly wrong in proceeding in so momentous an affair without seeking GOD's direction, or referring to the Divine revelation, which had been formerly made.

However Esau might have despised his birth right, he was not ignorant of the value of the Divine promises; nor does he seem to have been destitute of faith in them, for he readily made preparations for receiving the paternal benediction; but his faith was not productive of obedience; for so far was he from being perfectly attached* to the LORD, that he intermarried with those very nations who were designed to be cut off for their wickedness; and he transferred the birth right to Jacob, and solemnly called in the LORD Himself† as a witness of his willingness to forego the advantage of having Him as a GOD, which was a principal part of the *Everlasting Covenant*.—Had the blessing been merely *personal*, surely he would have deserved to lose it. And in fact it was, properly speaking, Esau who was the *supplanter*, for Jacob had a right to the blessing, both by Divine appointment, and the solemn resignation of Esau.

Isaac's violent agitation, when he discovered the fraud that had been practiced on him, may be imputed to a sudden recollection that he had opposed the revealed will of GOD, in intending to give to his eldest son the blessing destined for the youngest. It is evident that Isaac did not design to offend the LORD; on the contrary, he resisted the earnest importunities, and even bitter tears of a darling son, and could not be prevailed upon to make a *deliberate* attempt to counteract the decree of Heaven, but *voluntarily* confirmed the blessing, which he had *inadvertently* pronounced.

All that Isaac could do to console Esau, was, to pronounce the blessing which GOD designed for *his* posterity; and it is remarkable, that it was equal in value to that pronounced on

* Gen. xxv. 33.

† Gen. xvii. 1.

Jacob's, excepting in the circumstance of *supremacy*, and that even this was to continue only for a season.

The practical instruction which Reason teaches us to collect from this section, seems to be, that fathers and mothers should not give a partial preference to any one of their children.—That brothers ought not to endeavour to circumvent each other; that the practice of deceit and falshood, even from pious motives, will cast an odium upon the best characters; and that parents should not entice their children into sin; nor children yield to their parents' persuasions, when their own consciences tell them, that by doing so they will offend God.

We have not, like the Patriarchs, particular revelations concerning the future prosperity of our descendants; but a title to the *Everlasting Covenant* has been purchased for *us*, and for *our children*.—The means to secure this title are proposed in the Scriptures; therefore, instead of endeavouring, with a too anxious solicitude for their *worldly* interest, to do the work of Divine Providence in their behalf, let us instil into their minds lessons of piety, and accustom them to study the oracles of God as the best rules of moral conduct; then will they be upright and sincere in all their words and actions, and affectionately united to each other, and the LORD Himself will bestow on them his choicest blessings, both *temporal* and *eternal*.

S E C T. XXXIII.

ISAAC BLESSETH JACOB, AND SENDETH HIM TO
PADAN-ARAM.

AND Esau hated Jacob, because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed him: and Esau said in his heart, The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I slay my brother Jacob.

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau as touching thee doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

Now, therefore, my son, obey my voice, and arise, flee thou to Laban my brother, to Haran: and tarry with him a few days, until thy brother's fury turn away; until thy brother's anger turn away from thee, and he forget that which thou hast done to him: then I will send and fetch thee from thence: why should I be deprived also of you both in one day?

And Rebekah said to Isaac, I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth: if Jacob take a wife of the daughters of Heth, such as these which are of the daughters of the land, what good shall my life do me?

And

And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan.

Arise, go to Padan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We observed in the last section, that had the BLESSING, which was the object of contention between the two brothers, been a *personal* one, Esau deserved to lose it; and the same may be said in respect to Jacob, who soon found to his sorrow, that those honours, which are purchased at the expence of sincerity and truth, cannot be enjoyed with tranquillity of mind. Instead of being treated as the *heir of the promises*, he was obliged, in order to save his life, to leave his native home, forsake his aged father, and tear himself from the arms of his indulgent mother.—He, who had been accustomed from his infancy to a quiet domestic life, was under the necessity of undertaking a long fatiguing journey of 450 miles, without a single attendant to direct his steps, or soothe his sorrows. He was even destitute of the means of subsistence for any length of time. He could not request his father to give him a younger son's portion; and besides, Isaac was led to believe, that Jacob undertook the journey merely in search of a wife; neither could Jacob carry any great stock of provisions with him. He was indeed going to his mother's relations; but many misfortunes might befall him by the way; and it was probable they would not receive him, or grant him a settlement among them. He
had

had no flocks or herds to begin the world with ; nor do we read that he was skilled, like Ishmael, in the use of the bow and arrows. From these circumstances it is evident, that, in respect to his own immediate happiness, it would have been better for Jacob, at that time, to have lived in a subordinate rank to his brother.

An equal punishment fell upon Rebekah ; for we may easily conceive that she suffered extreme distress of mind at first, from the apprehension that Esau would actually kill Jacob ; and afterwards, from being obliged to part with the object of her tenderest affections.

Here appears then no *partiality* in the dispensations of Providence, in respect to the two brothers ; for Jacob was immediately punished, by being launched into the wide world to seek his fortune ; and Esau left without a rival, to enjoy all the comforts and advantages, which the paternal roof afforded.

The threat which Esau threw out against Jacob, was, in all probability, uttered while he was under violent perturbation of mind, occasioned by his disappointment of the paternal blessing ; for it does not appear that he made any actual attempt to take away his brother's life, or that he retained his hatred.

Rebekah took a very prudent step, in sending Jacob to her own relations ; and is not to be blamed for the excuse she made for doing so ; because the desire that he should marry in her family, was doubtless *one* of her reasons for wishing him to go thither ; and had she told the *whole* truth to her husband, while he was in such a weak state of health, it might have occasioned his death ; at least it would have raised his anger against Esau, and there is no knowing what bad consequences might have ensued to all parties.

We may easily conceive, from the general character of Jacob, that his heart was overwhelmed with affliction, when
he

he found, that he must leave all his tender connections behind him; and though the Sacred Historian is silent in this particular, it is most likely that he felt contrition for the part he had acted.

The prayer which Isaac offered up, when he dismissed Jacob, shews, that he was satisfied his paternal blessing had been bestowed agreeably to the Divine will; and we may also understand from it, that this blessing included every particular contained in the original blessing, bestowed by the LORD on *Abraham* *—This was the portion Jacob had so solicitously sought for, and with this he was contented. He asked for no provision from his father; but taking his *staff* in his hand †, he bade adieu to his native home, and committed himself to the care of that GOD, whose promises he firmly believed.

Esau, by degrees, became sensible of his errors. A recent instance had convinced him of his folly in selling his birth-right. He next repented that he had displeased his father, by marrying idolatrous women; and endeavoured to repair his fault by taking another wife, who he thought would be more agreeable to him:—but his repentance availed nothing; nor indeed would a conduct the reverse of that which he had pursued, have made any difference in respect to that peculiar blessing, in consequence of which, one branch of Abraham's family was to be separated to the LORD in an extraordinary manner; and from whom should descend the *promised seed of the woman*, to bless all the families of the earth, by redeeming them from the curse pronounced on mankind after the fall, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*.

We are left to make our own reflections on this part of Sacred History; and, therefore, are at liberty to approve or condemn, as our reason, and the knowledge we have

* Gen. xii. 2, 3.

† Gen. xxxii. 10.

acquired from other parts of Divine revelation, shall suggest.

There is something so very unnatural in *hating a brother*, that no provocation can justify it to the common feelings of humanity : and we learn, from the instance of Cain, that if carried to such a height as to end in murder, it is highly provoking to God. Happily for Esau, he was prevented by Jacob's flight from executing the wicked purpose he had formed : or what would have been the sufferings of a mind like his, subject to transports of vehement passions, had he actually killed his brother ? Every one, therefore, should endeavour to strengthen themselves against temptation to so horrid a sin, by cherishing tender affection for those who stand in so near a degree of relation to them ; and should accustom themselves to have as great a regard for the interest and prosperity of their brothers and sisters, as for their own. Abraham gives an example of this, in his behaviour to Lot, who was only his nephew. — *Let there be no strife*, said he, *between me and thee, are we not BRETHREN ?* It is easy to see, that had Jacob and Esau acted upon this principle, neither of them would have had a desire of circumventing the other ; but each would have left the affair of the birth-right to be determined by the will of Heaven.

When family disputes arise to so unfortunate a height, that there is no prospect of effecting a reconciliation, prudence requires, that mothers should, like Rebekah, endeavour to separate the contending parties ; and conceal, as far as possible, from each of them, every thing that may have a tendency to encrease their animosities. The quarrels of their children are among the things which a wife may forbear to reveal to her husband ; in cases where his interposition is not likely to be of use ; and when the knowledge of them will only add to his cares, and perhaps shorten his days with sorrow.

Every

Every person, who feels a conviction of mind that a measure, which they wish to pursue, is contrary to the revealed will of God, should immediately, like Isaac, change their purpose, and persevere in their known duty on all future occasions. And whoever is conscious that he has acted wrong, by endeavouring to anticipate Providence, should, like Jacob, acquiesce in the natural consequences of his precipitation, and arm his mind with patience to endure the worst that can befall him.

S E C T. XXXIV.

JACOB'S DREAM.

AND Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran.

And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set: and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending, and descending on it.

And behold the LORD stood above it, and said, I am the LORD GOD of Abraham thy father, and the GOD of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed.

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east,

east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

And Jacob waked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

And he called the name of that place Beth-el: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; so that I come again to my father's house in peace: then shall the LORD be my God.

And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though it is not expressly mentioned, there is great reason to believe, from Jacob's habitual piety, and the favour which was shewed him by the LORD, that he implored Divine forgiveness for yielding to the temptations, which a fond mother had inconsiderately thrown in his way; and that he professed a firm faith in the predictions which his father, by Divine inspiration, had pronounced.

Jacob now experienced a great change in his condition. Instead of enjoying the endearing society of a tender parent, and all the accommodations of domestic life, to which he, who had ever dwelt in tents*, was accustomed, he found himself alone, weary and benighted, in a place which afforded him no shelter from the cold air, nor any bed but the hard ground; so that he may be said to have had no earthly comfort: yet we do not find that he murmured at his lot, or gave up his mind to despondency; on the contrary, he with great composure, placed a stone for his pillow, and laid down to sleep; from whence we may reasonably infer, that he relied on the mercy and goodness of God.

The dream, which Jacob had at this time, was of a similar nature with that which Abraham had, when the LORD made a covenant with him †; and we find that he regarded it as an evident manifestation of the DIVINE PRESENCE. It was indeed a *vision*, like those afterwards seen by the Jewish Prophets ‡, in which, representations were made to the mind, by the miraculous power of God, without the usual instruments of sight.

* Gen. xxv. 27.

† Gen. xv. 12; or Section 17.

‡ Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and St. John.

The ladder * which Jacob beheld, may be understood in an *emblematical* sense. Its being set on the earth, seems to denote the steadiness of Providence, which no created being is able to unsettle. Its reaching up to Heaven to signify, its universality or extension to all things. The several steps of the ladder may be regarded as the motions and actions of Providence. The Angels going up and down, as the great ministers of Providence, never idle, but constantly executing the Divine will, either in heaven or on earth. The LORD on the top evidently denotes, that He is the *visible image of the invisible* GOD, overlooking, governing, and preserving all things; and it is to be observed, that the LORD was, in this vision, eminently distinguished from the *Angelic Host*; and that He declared Himself to be the GOD of Abraham and Isaac, that is to say, the ALMIGHTY GOD†.

In respect to Jacob, this dream was particularly calculated to furnish his mind with hope and comfort against the various turns of fortune, which it would be his fate to experience. The promises conveyed to him in the paternal benediction, were, as we have already remarked, *national*, and related to his *posterity*. At this time the LORD graciously vouchsafed to promise him *personal* blessings. Though these promises were made while the powers of his body were suspended, Jacob doubted not the reality of them; but considered the spot on which he slept, as *sanctified* by the DIVINE PRESENCE, like those on which GOD had appeared to Abraham and Isaac, where we may suppose these faithful servants frequently assembled their households and dependants, before any buildings were erected for public worship.

No wonder that Jacob was so sensibly affected with awe and reverence, by the glorious scenes that were presented to *his mind's eye*, and that he fancied himself at the *gate of heaven*!

* See Stackhouse on the Bible.

† Gen. xvii. 1; or Section 19.

He seems to have conceived, that the LORD was graciously entering into a *personal covenant* with him, in addition to that which concerned his posterity; and he was so well acquainted with the principles of religion, that he knew the Divine promises were *conditional*, and required something to be done on his part; therefore, without waiting for the *Divine command*, he *voluntarily* promised, in the most solemn manner, that if it should please GOD to grant him but such a moderate supply of the necessities of life, as would sustain nature; give him an opportunity of returning to his father's house, and bless him with the means of shewing his gratitude, he would honour the LORD as his GOD, in the way his fathers had done; commemorate the Divine goodness at that place; and make a willing offering of the increase of his substance for religious uses.

There is something in Jacob's vow peculiarly modest, and suitable to the condition of a man, who possessed nothing of his own at that time, but depended entirely on the bounty of heaven for a future supply.

It will appear, that Jacob considered the LORD as his GOD, from this *instant*; and that he never gave himself up to idolatrous practices, in the midst of his severest trials.

The ceremony which Jacob observed, of pouring oil on the stone which had been his pillow, signified, consecration of it to GOD. As the LORD permitted this act, we may conclude, that he prevented the stone from being taken away; and that it remained there, to put Jacob in mind of his vow; and likewise to keep up the remembrance of it among his descendants.

This section affords a striking proof, that GOD's particular Providence watches over His servants; that He is about their bed, and about their path, and spieth out all their ways*; that He has compassion on their infirmities, and supports their minds under difficult circumstances.

* Pf. xxxix. 2.

The LORD, in his vision to Jacob, declared, that He is really GOD; let us, therefore, acknowledge and worship Him as such, and implore His protection at all times, particularly when we are under the necessity of taking perilous journeys.—If it is our fate to leave our native country, and travel to a land where the LORD is either not known, or worshipped in a superstitious manner, let us not suppose, that *He is not there*; for as He was with Jacob in *all places*, so will He be with every one that honours His holy name, and wishes for communion with Him.—The LORD, it is true, has not actually made a personal covenant with us, as He did with Jacob; but we have, as a *nation*, a share with the rest of *the families of the earth*, in the *Everlasting Covenant*; and, from GOD's promises to the Patriarchs, we may understand, what *kind* of blessings He will bestow on *individuals*, who adhere to Him; for He is *no respecter of persons*.

All Christians, like Jacob, have a painful pilgrimage to perform on earth; but if they continue steadfast in the service of the LORD, He will sustain them with food, and raiment, and comfort them with the hopes of finally enjoying *peace in their father's house*, even in the *mansions of eternity*.—The painful conflicts and vicissitudes of life, shall, like Jacob's ladder, prove steps to conduct them to that blessed abode, in which the LORD displays the glory of the ineffable GODHEAD.

S E C T. XXXV.

JACOB HIRES HIMSELF TO LABAN, AND MARRIES
LEAH AND RACHEL.

THEN Jacob went on his journey, and came into the land of the people of the east. And he looked, and behold, a well in the field, and lo, there were three flocks of sheep lying by it: for out of that well they watered the flocks: and a great stone was upon the well's mouth.

And thither were all the flocks gathered: and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the sheep, and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in his place.

And Jacob said unto them, My brethren, whence be ye? and they said, Of Haran are we. And he said unto them, Know ye Laban the son of Nahor? and they said, We know him.

And he said unto them, Is he well? and they said, He is well: and behold Rachel his daughter cometh with the sheep.

And he said, Lo, it is yet high day, neither is it time that the cattle should be gathered together: water ye the sheep, and go and feed them.

And they said, We cannot until all the flocks be gathered together, and till they roll the stone from the well's mouth; then we water the sheep.

And while he yet spake with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep : for she kept them.

And it came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel the daughter of Laban his mother's brother, and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother ; that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth ; and watered the flock of Laban his mother's brother.

And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's brother, and that he was Rebekah's son : and she ran and told her father.

And it came to pass, when Laban heard the tidings of Jacob his sister's son, that he ran to meet him, and embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house, and he told Laban all these things.

And Laban said to him, Surely thou art my bone and my flesh. And he abode with him the space of a month.

And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldest thou therefore serve me for nought ? tell me what shall thy wages be ?

And Laban had two daughters : the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed : but Rachel was beautiful and well-favoured.

And Jacob loved Rachel ; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, It is better that I give her to thee,
than

than that I should give her to another man: abide with me. And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.

And Jacob said unto Laban, Give me my wife for my days are fulfilled. And Laban gathered together all the men of the place, and made a feast. And it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter, and brought her unto him.

And Jacob said unto him, What is this thou hast done unto me? did I not serve thee for Rachel? wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?

And Laban said, It must not be so done in our country, to give the younger before the first-born.

Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also, for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years.

And Jacob did so, and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also.

And Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah, and served with him yet seven other years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Animated by the divine promises, Jacob was encouraged to pursue his journey; for he now knew, as a certainty, that he was under the particular protection of PROVIDENCE.

Considering the circumstances which Jacob was in, we cannot wonder that he felt such extraordinary emotions of joy as drew tears from his eyes, when he found in his mother's family, a woman so agreeable to his wishes.

It appears that Jacob did not remain an idle guest in his uncle's house, but endeavoured to make himself as useful as possible; but justice required, that as he was destitute of a provision, and earned more than his maintenance cost, he should have wages.

It was at that time a custom in contracting marriages, that as the wife brought a portion to her husband, he should make some present to her friends in return. Jacob therefore being destitute of money, offered to his uncle seven years service, which was equivalent to a large sum. Why he did not rather send to his father for a supply, the Scripture does not mention; but it is likely that Jacob having received such gracious promises from God, thought it incumbent on him to depend upon the blessing of Providence, on his own labours, rather than to ask assistance from his friends: and Isaac might be restrained from providing for him (as Abraham was in the case of Ishmael,) by a Divine command.

From his example in working for Laban, we are instructed, that the best way for persons in necessity to ensure a welcome among relations, is to endeavour to be useful to them. The treachery of Laban needs no comment. The custom of having a plurality of wives, prevailed generally in that part of the world, and Jacob did not know it was wrong to comply with it.

S E C T. XXXVI.

HISTORY OF JACOB CONTINUED.

AND when the LORD saw that Jacob hated Leah, he gave her children, but Rachel had none, and Rachel envied her sister, and said unto Jacob, give me children, or else I die.

And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel, and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld

held children from thee? And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and she bare a son, and she called his name Joseph.

And Jacob had two other wives, Bilhah the handmaid of Rachel, and Zilpah the handmaid of Leah, and they also bare children.

And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country.

Give me my wives and my children, for whom I have served thee, and let me go: for thou knowest my service which I have done thee.

And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience, that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

And he said, appoint me thy wages, and I will give it.

And he said unto him, Thou knowest how I have served thee, and how thy cattle was with me.

For it was little which thou hadst before I came, and it is now increased unto a multitude; and the LORD hath blessed thee since my coming: and now when shall I provide for mine own house also?

And he said, What shall I give thee? and Jacob said, Thou shalt not give me any thing: if thou wilt do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep thy flock:

I will pass through all thy flock to-day, removing from thence all the speckled and spotted cattle, and all the brown cattle among the sheep, and the spotted and speckled among the goats : and of such shall be my hire.

So shall my righteousness answer for me in time to come, when it shall come for my hire before thy face : every one that is not speckled and spotted among the goats, and brown among the sheep, that shall be accounted stolen with me.

And Laban said, Behold, I would it might be according to thy word.

And he removed that day the he-goats that were ring-straked and spotted, and all the she-goats that were speckled and spotted, and every one that had some white in it, and all the brown among the sheep, and gave them into the hand of his sons.

And he set three days journey betwixt himself and Jacob : and Jacob fed the rest of Laban's flocks.

And it came to pass, that the flocks brought forth cattle, ring-straked, speckled, and spotted.

And the man increased exceedingly, and had much cattle, and maid-servants, and men-servants, and camels, and asses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We here find, that soon after Jacob's settlement in Mesopotamia, the Divine promises began to operate. An increase of family gave him a prospect of the accomplishment of that
part

part of the covenant by which he was taught to expect, that a *great nation would proceed from him*; and without doubt he placed his dependance on the *promised seed* arising among it.

It was a very heavy disappointment to Rachel, that she was not likely to share the honour which such a numerous progeny would bring on her husband; yet he justly reproved her impatience under it, because *children are an heritage and gift that cometh of the LORD*; and to murmur at his withholding them, is sinful*.

Jacob having, as we may conclude, fully completed his last seven years, was naturally desirous of returning into his own country; and having, besides, a large family to support, we cannot wonder that he should wish to have something of his own, rather than continue to live in a state of dependance with a mercenary master.

Jacob had a right to expect that Laban would now give him some portion with his daughters, as he had found such advantages from his connection with him.

The terms which Jacob made with Laban, appear very reasonable; and we must consider the great encrease of those kinds of cattle, goats and sheep, which he fixed upon, entirely as an act of Providence; for Jacob could not foresee that there would be so great a proportion of ring-straked, &c. neither was it in his power by any human heart to make one hair of them white or black † ‡.

* Psalm cxxvii. 3.

† Matt. v. 36.

‡ As Jacob's conduct in respect to peeling the rods (which I have omitted) has the appearance of artifice, it may be proper to remark, that it is most likely he was required to do this, in order to express his faith in God, by whose suggestion he had fixed upon the cattle, that were speckled, &c. By this sign then he may be understood to have testified his firm belief, that the LORD was able to make cattle produce young ones of any colours, and that he certainly would make Laban's have speckled ones, since He had directed Jacob to name such for his wages.

The extraordinary blessing which followed Jacob's services, might be intended partly to encourage his faith in the Divine promises; and partly to point him out to the world as a man peculiarly favoured by the LORD.

We learn from this Section, that it is good policy to employ in our domestic concerns, persons of piety and integrity. Such people acting from *principle*, will be anxious to make their *righteousness* or *fidelity* appear, and perhaps it is the ordinary course of Providence to send a blessing on their labours.

S E C T. XXXVII.

JACOB DEPARTETH FROM MESOPOTAMIA.

AND Jacob heard the words of Laban's sons, saying, Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this glory.

And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and behold, it was not toward him as before.

And the LORD said unto Jacob, Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred: and I will be with thee.

And Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to the field unto his flock, and said unto them, I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before: but the GOD of my father hath been with me.

And ye know that with all my power I have served your father: and your father hath deceived me,

me, and changed my wages ten times: but God suffered him not to hurt me.

If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ring-straked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ring-straked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me.

And it came to pass, that the Angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob; and I said, Here am I; and he said, I am the God of Beth-el, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred.

And Rachel and Leah answered, and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God hath taken from our father, that is ours and our children's: now then whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do.

Then Jacob rose up, and set his sons and his wives upon camels; and he carried away all his cattle, and all his goods which he had gotten, the cattle of his getting, which he had gotten in Padan-aram; for to go to Isaac his father in the land of Canaan.

And

And Laban went to shear his sheep: and Rachel had stolen the images that were her father's. And Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had, and he rose up, and passed over the river, and set his face toward the mount Gilead.

And it was told Laban on the third day that Jacob was fled: and he took his brethren with him, and pursued after him seven day's journey; and they overtook him in the mount Gilead.

And God came to Laban the Syrian in a dream by night, and said unto him, Take heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad.

Then Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the mount: and Laban with his brethren pitched in the mount of Gilead. And Laban said to Jacob, What hast thou done, that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters as captives taken with the sword?

Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me? and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?

And hast not suffered me to kiss my sons and my daughters? thou hast now done foolishly in so doing. It is in the power of my hand to do you hurt: but the God of your father spake unto me yesternight, saying, Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad. And

And now though thou wouldest needs be gone, because thou sore longedst after thy father's house; yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

And Jacob answered and said to Laban, Because I was afraid: for I said, Peradventure thou wouldest take by force thy daughters from me.

With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, let him not live: before our brethren discern thou what is thine with me, and take it to thee: for Jacob knew not that Rachel had stolen them.

And Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the two-maid servan's tents; but he found them not. Then went he out of Leah's tent, and entered into Rachel's tent.

Now Rachel had taken the images, and put them in the camel's furniture, and sat upon them: and Laban searched all the tent, but found them not.

And Jacob was wroth, and chode with Laban: and Jacob answered, and said to Laban, What is my trespass? what is my sin, that thou hast so hotly pursued after me?

Whereas thou hast searched all my stuff, what hast thou found of all thy household stuff? set it here before my brethren and thy brethren, that they may judge betwixt us both.

These twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten.

That

That which was torn of beasts, I brought not unto thee : I bare the loss of it ; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night.

Thus I was, in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.

Thus have I been twenty years in thy house : I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle : and thou hast changed my wages ten times.

Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me, surely thou hadst sent me away now empty. God hath seen mine affliction, and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yesternight.

And Laban answered and said unto Jacob, These daughters are my daughters, and these children are my children, and these cattle are my cattle, and all that thou seest is mine : and what can I do this day unto these my daughters, or unto their children which they have born ?

Now therefore come thou, let us make a covenant, I and thou ; and let it be for a witness between me and thee.

And Jacob took a stone, and set it up for a pillar. And Jacob said unto his brethren, Gather stones ; and they took stones, and made an heap ; and they did eat there upon the heap. And Laban

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ban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed: and Laban said, 'This heap is a witness between me and thee this day; therefore was the name of it called Galeed: and Mizpah; for he said, The LORD watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.

If thou shalt afflict my daughters, or if thou shalt take other wives besides my daughters, no man is with us; See, God is witness betwixt me and thee.

And Laban said to Jacob, Behold this heap, and behold this pillar, which I have cast betwixt me and thee. This heap be witness, and this pillar be witness, that I will not pass over this heap to thee, and that thou shalt not pass over this heap and this pillar unto me, for harm.

The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge betwixt us.

And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac. Then Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount, and called his brethren to eat bread: and they did eat bread, and tarried all night in the mount.

And early in the morning Laban rose up, and kissed his sons and his daughters, and blessed them: and Laban departed, and returned unto his place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is something so uncomfortable in living among relations, who are jealous and envious, that Jacob's desire of leaving Mesopotamia, in order to be out of the way of Laban and his sons, appears very natural.

We

We find, that they set no account by his own labour; but, because he had grown rich while connected with them, supposed every thing he possessed to belong to Laban; but in saying, that *Jacob had taken away all that was their father's*, they accused him unjustly; for we read in a former section, that when Jacob settled with his father-in-law the terms of his hire, a separation was made of all Laban's cattle, and the *white* ones only were committed to his care; the others were given into the hands of Laban's sons, and removed three days journey from Jacob's charge. According to this agreement, Laban had no property in any that proceeded from these flocks and herds, unless they were *white* also; for the cattle, &c. that were *speckled* or *straked*, were allotted to Jacob, as a consideration for the time he spent in Laban's service, and therefore, were as justly his property, as if he had purchased them with money.

We find, from Jacob's complaints to his wives, as well as from his subsequent expostulations with Laban, that he had conducted himself with the strictest equity; and, in order to satisfy his father-in-law, had submitted to a change of wages every time the cattle bore young ones, which, in that country, was twice a year. A most unpleasant life surely had Jacob! toiling and slaving night and day, exposed to all the inclemencies of the weather, and fretted with the discontent of those for whom he had acquired great wealth, but who nevertheless could not bear to see him making any provision for his own increasing family. Yet all this did he patiently endure, till the LORD expressly called him to return into his own country; for he considered himself as heir to the promises, and, as such, entirely at God's disposal.

It is observable, that, in the dream which Jacob related to his wives, he was reminded of the covenant which GOD made with him at Bethel, and of his own vow. The LORD had been with him, had given him "food to eat, and raiment

ment to put on," and was now about to conduct him "to his father's house in peace;" it was therefore his duty to obey the Divine summons, and to fulfil his part of the covenant, which till now he had no opportunity of doing.

Jacob's wives seem to have been sharers with him in the uneasiness he suffered from the discontent of their father and brethren. The change which was effected in Laban's mind, when he was pursuing Jacob with purposes of vengeance, verifies the royal Psalmist's words, who says, *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain* *." This seasonable interposition of Divine Providence, was an instance of God's favour to Jacob in particular, but proved a mercy to all parties; for had not the wrath of Laban been restrained, there would have been a dreadful contest, when he and his sons overtook the fugitives: but it is to be observed, that there was no *absolute* restraint laid upon Laban's *free-will*, for he told Jacob that he was still possessed of the power to hurt him: his forbearance, therefore, is to be attributed to the fear of God, and a conviction in his mind that he was before going to commit sin.

What the *gods* were, which Rachel stole, and why she took them, is uncertain; nor is it at all material for us to know, because it is evident, that, in this respect, she is not proposed as an example for our imitation. If she made use of them in worship, it must have been in consequence of an erroneous education; and Jacob, in all probability, had it not in his power to overcome these prejudices, while he was a *sojourner* in a country, addicted to these practices. We shall find, in the course of the history, that, as soon as he could, he put a stop to them in his own family. It is manifest, that Laban believed the LORD to be the SUPREME GOD; and the covenant between him and Jacob seems to

* Ps. lxxvi. 10.

have been conducted in a manner conformable to the religion of the Patriarchs.—Laban's mind was very properly affected at parting with his children.

If Jacob had not been of a very peaceable disposition, he could not have lived for 20 years among spiteful, envious relations. Those who are unhappily under the same circumstances, should take example from him, to bear every thing with patience and good humour, till it shall please God to bless them with a prospect of changing their situation for the better; and should, in the mean while, endeavour to conduct themselves in such an equitable manner, that their actions may be approved in the sight of God. Then may they defy calumny, and confidently hope, that his Providence will so order events, that finally *their enemies will be at peace with them**.

Laban himself affords an example worthy of imitation; for he suppressed his resentment, as soon as he knew that, by indulging it, he should offend God.—Laban had no *written Scriptures* to furnish rules for his conduct; and, therefore, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to instruct him by *immediate revelation*.—Christians have a still greater advantage than he had, in being taught their duty, before their passions have gained ground, or they are put to any great trials. From the Book of God they may learn in their *childhood*, that they should “cease from anger, and forsake wrath; and in no wise fret themselves to do evil†. That he who is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city‡; and that they should not let the sun go down upon their wrath§.”

* Prov. xvi. 7.

† Ps. xxxvii. 8.

‡ Prov. xvi. 32.

§ Eph. iv. 26.

S E C T. XXXVIII.

JACOB SENDS MESSENGERS TO ESAU.

AND Jacob went on his way, and the angels of
GOD met him.

And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is GOD's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim.

And Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother, unto the land of Seir, the country of Edom.

And he commanded them, saying, Thus shall ye speak unto my lord Esau; Thy servant Jacob saith thus, I have sojourned with Laban, and stayed there until now.

And I have oxen and asses, flocks, and men-servants, and women-servants: and I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight.

And the messengers returned to Jacob, saying, We came to thy brother Esau, and also he cometh to meet thee, and four hundred men with him.

Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels into two bands; And said, If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape.

And Jacob said, O GOD of my father Abraham, and GOD of my father Isaac, thou LORD which saidst
unto

unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee:

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant: for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.

Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children.

And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.

And he lodged there that same night, and took of that which came to his hand, a present for Esau his brother; two hundred she-goats, and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams.

Thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she-asses, and ten foles.

And he delivered them into the hand of his servants, every drove by themselves; and said unto his servants, Pass over before me, and put a space betwixt drove and drove.

And he commanded the foremost, saying, When Esau my brother meeteth thee, and asketh thee, saying, Whose art thou? and whither goest thou? and whose are these before thee?

Then thou shalt say, They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and behold also he is behind us.

And

And so commanded he the second and the third, and all that followed the droves, saying, On this manner shall you speak unto Esau when you find him.

And say ye moreover, Behold, thy servant Jacob is behind us. For he said, I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face ; peradventure he will accept of me.

So went the present over before him : and himself lodged that night in the company. And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two women servants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok.

And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

King David, in one of his Psalms, writes *, that "THE ANGEL OF THE LORD encampeth about them that fear Him, and delivered them." The portion of Scripture contained in the Section before us, exemplifies this truth.

The ANGEL OF THE LORD, who (as we shall read in the course of this history) is also stiled the LORD OF HOSTS, had caused a number of celestial beings to watch around the *Heir of the promises*, and enabled his eyes to behold them. At first Jacob knew not that these angels were appointed to guard him and his family ; and perhaps it was requisite that before this circumstance was made known to him, Jacob should implore help from the LORD.

* Psalm xxxiv. 7.

The remembrance of the deceptions he had practised, in order to secure the birth-right, and of Esau's threat which had driven him into a strange land, awakened in his mind the most distressing fears. Conscious of his demerits, he could not claim the accomplishment of the divine promise, *I will be with thee in all places wheresoever thou goest*, till he had humbled himself to Esau, and done all in his power for appeasing him; with this view he sent the messengers to Seir, to acquaint Esau with his approach, and with the means whereby he had acquired the riches which he brought with him. The report of these messengers (as we find) rather encreased than lessened Jacob's fears; for he knew that his brother was *to live by his sword* *, and should it be lifted up against him and his family, what defence could he make? For this reason we may suppose Jacob thought it prudent to approach as an humble suppliant for Esau's favour.

The precaution which Jacob used in dividing his people, &c. into two bands, was a very wise one; but after all, he could not be certain that his well-concerted measures would succeed, yet nothing else could his own heart devise; he had therefore recourse to GOD. The manner of Jacob's address to the DEITY, was perfectly consistent with that faith which was reckoned to the Patriarchs for *righteousness*. It was expressive of the utmost humility; Jacob pleaded no *merits*; all his hope and expectation of favour were founded upon the *Divine promises*, and the *mercies* which GOD of his own *free grace* had already granted him.

Jacob did not, however, presumptuously throw himself upon *Providence*: he still used *human means*; trusting for a happy event to the goodness of the LORD, who, by a secret influence on his mind, calmed his fears, so that he ventured to send his family on before him.

We have already remarked†, that there is something delightful in the expectation of finding in Heaven, a set of

* See Section 32.

† See Section 22.

benevolent

benevolent friends, ready to welcome us to those blessed abodes. It is an additional comfort to think, that angels are frequently the invisible companions of men on earth. Their intercourse with us, is of a nature which we cannot understand, because it is spiritual, and therefore it would be to no purpose to endeavour to discover it. But the Scripture teaches us, that they are God's ministers, sent forth to guard all who are *heirs of the promises*, from their spiritual enemies*; and the idea that such pure intelligences are spectators of our conduct, ought to be an additional motive to circumspection.

In Jacob's distress at the thoughts of meeting Esau, we see the *power of conscience*; even a divine promise could not silence his apprehensions, when he reflected on the offences he had committed:—How cautious then should every person be, to avoid unworthy actions, since they have a natural tendency to abate our confidence in God! But should we, unfortunately for ourselves, thus wound our peace of mind; the only remedy that can be sought with success, is the mercy of God. The Lord alone can supply us with the balm of consolation. And what human being has not at one time or other experienced the want of it? Who that has supplicated like Jacob, has been denied this heavenly boon? Let us then on these unhappy occasions, earnestly implore our God and Saviour to deliver us in his infinite goodness, from the consequences of our own misconduct; using at the same time every mean in our power, for conciliating the favour of those we have offended.

* Heb. i. 14.

S E C T. XXXIX.

JACOB'S WRESTLING.

AND Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day.

And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh: and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.

And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh: and he said, I will not let thee go, except thou blest me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob.

And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.

And Jacob asked him and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name: and he said, wherefore is it, that thou dost ask after my name? and he blessed him there.

And Jacob called the name of the place, Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.

And as he passed over Penuel, the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.

Therefore the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day; because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The passage of Scripture contained in this Section, is very obscure, and cannot be fully explained. It may be conjectured, that Jacob having conducted his family in safety over the brook Jabbok, returned to the place where he had beheld the angelic host, in order to pass a little time in private devotion at that sacred spot, and entreat the LORD to grant him some evident blessing to support his mind under the conflicts which disturbed it. It is most likely that the wrestling was a visionary scene; but it is clear from Jacob's own words, that the LORD manifested his Divine presence to him at this time in an extraordinary manner, and at his earnest importunity, granted him a blessing, by giving him, in addition to the name he already was known by, that of *Israel*, (or a prince of GOD) which was designed as a token, that the LORD would favour him and his posterity, for his *own sake*, as well as for the sake of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob was now made a *prince*, which intimated, that on his return to Canaan, he should not live in a subordinate capacity. The sudden lameness which seized him, was perhaps occasioned at first to convince, and afterwards to remind him, of his own *natural weakness*. That he had *power with GOD*, was owing to the Divine indulgence alone, as Jacob was well convinced; for he expressed his astonishment that he had beheld the face (or Image) of GOD, and was yet alive *. A very improper use is sometimes made of this portion of Scripture by Enthusiasts, who talk much of *wrestling with GOD in prayer*; but, as in this passage, there is no general instruction pointed out by the Sacred Historian, or obvious to human reason, it is best to consider it as a matter relating to Jacob only, as the

* The word *Peniel* signifies the *face of God*.

head of a nation, who, without doubt, understood its import. It is not necessary that Christians should so fully comprehend what seems to have a particular reference to the Jewish economy.

S E C T. XL.

JACOB'S RECONCILIATION WITH HIS BROTHER
ESAU.

AND Jacob lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, Esau came, and with him four hundred men. And he divided the children unto Leah, and unto Rachel, and unto the two hand-maids.

And he put the hand-maids and their children foremost, and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Joseph hindermost.

And he passed over before them, and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother.

And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept.

And he lift up his eyes, and saw the women, and the children, and said, Who are those with thee? and he said, The children which God hath graciously given thy servant.

Then the hand-maidens came near, they and their children, and they bowed themselves. And Leah also with her children came near, and bowed themselves: and after came Joseph near and Rachel, and they bowed themselves. And

And Esau said, What meanest thou by all this drove which I met? and he said, these are to find grace in the sight of my lord.

And Esau said, I have enough: my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself.

And Jacob said, Nay, I pray thee, if now I have found grace in thy sight, then receive my present at my hand: for therefore I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me.

Take, I pray thee, my blessing that is brought to thee; because God hath dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough: and he urged him, and he took it.

And Esau said, Let us take our journey, and let us go, and I will go before thee.

And Jacob said unto him, My lord knoweth that the children are tender, and the flocks and herds with young are with me, and if men should over-drive them one day, all the flock will die.

Let my lord, I pray thee, pass over before his servant: and I will lead on softly according as the cattle that goeth before me, and the children be able to endure: until I come unto my lord unto Seir.

And Esau said, Let me now leave with thee some of the folk that are with me: and Jacob said, What needeth it? let me find grace in the sight of my lord?

So Esau returned that day on his way unto Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built him an house, and made booths for his cattle : therefore the name of the place is called Succoth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We learn, from another part of Sacred History, that Esau and his family had driven out the Horims, or Horites, who dwelt in mount Seir, and settled themselves in their stead *. This happened while Jacob was in Mesopotamia; Esau therefore became a *prince*, while Jacob was only a *servant*; this consideration, added to the consciousness of his offence, might induce Jacob to approach his brother in the humble manner which is described in this Section. By calling Esau his *lord*, and himself Esau's *servant*, Jacob certainly did not mean to give up his spiritual advantages, but merely to shew his respect, as is still the custom among men who stile persons of rank their lords, and themselves their servants, without owing them any particular homage.

It is needless to remark the good policy of Jacob in dividing his flock into different parties.

From Esau's affectionate behaviour to Jacob, we may infer, that he was not upon the whole, of a bad disposition; for no one could testify more generosity and kindness than he did upon this occasion; the great fault in his character was, slighting the Divine promises.

It is observable, that of the two, Esau appears to have had the highest joy, for his had no alloy.—It gave him the sincerest delight to press to his bosom, a brother whom long absence had endeared; he had the farther satisfaction of shewing his generosity, by freely forgiving former offences. It

* Deut. ii. 12.

was an additional pleasure to receive such an accession of new relations : Women whose virtues rendered them ornaments to the family, promising youths, and innocent children.—On the other hand, the joy which arose in Jacob's bosom was evidently chastised with fear ; still it *was* joy, and cheaply purchased by that humiliation, which on this occasion it was his duty to shew.

Jacob's expression " I have seen thy face, as though I had seen the face of God," implies, that he could not be satisfied without offering something by way of atonement, which he hoped his brother would receive, and regard in that light. To have refused his present, would have been unkind ; by accepting it, Esau removed his brother's apprehensions, and quieted his conscience. He regarded the present, not only as an atonement for past offences, but as a pledge of mutual kindness.

It is likely Jacob had other reasons, besides those he mentioned, for not attending his brother to Mount Seir ; but as he appears to have been of a good-natured, gentle disposition, we may readily believe, that he had, as he professed to have, a tender regard to the children and cattle.

Having seen the Host of the LORD, Jacob would have been very blameable had he accepted of a guard from Esau.

We are not told, why Jacob did not *follow* his brother to Seir ; but it is likely, that upon reflection, he thought it wrong to go thither, as he had received a Divine command to return into the land of his kindred ; besides, he must have an urgent desire to see his father. Rebekah is supposed to have died during his absence.

As such constant travelling was very fatiguing to his family, and his cattle were near having young ones, it was very prudent in Jacob to stop for a time. The house he built, was, in all probability, little more than a tent. In building booths for his cattle, he gave another instance of benevolence worthy of imitation.

There is something so truly interesting in the account which is here given of the reconciliation between the two brothers, that every reader must feel its force.—May those, who, like Esau, have met with treatment that appears injurious, be ready to take example from his noble conduct; and may all who have, like Jacob, brought displeasure upon themselves, by indirect practices, be as ready, as he was, to subdue resentment by proper concessions; then will each party know by happy experience, “how good and joyful a thing it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity *!”

* Psalm cxxxiii. 1.

S E C T. XII.

GOD APPEARETH TO JACOB. HE PUTTETH
AWAY IDOLS.

AND Jacob came to Shalem, a city of Shechem, which is the land of Canaan, when he came from Padan-aram; and pitched his tent before the city.

And he bought a parcel of a field, where he had spread his tent, at the hand of the children of Hamor Shechem's father, for an hundred pieces of money.

And he erected there an altar, and called it El-clohe-israel; that is, God, the God of Israel.

And God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Beth-el, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee, when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.

Then



JACOB PUTTETH AWAY IDOLS. zer

Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments :

And let us arise, and go up to Beth-el ; and I will make there an altar unto GOD, who answered me in the day of my distress, and was with me in the way which I went.

And they gave unto Jacob all the strange gods which were in their hand, and all their ear-rings, which were in their ears : and Jacob hid them under the oak that was by Shechem.

And they journeyed : and the terror of GOD was upon the cities that were round about them ; and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.

So Jacob came to Luz which is in the land of Canaan (that is Beth-el) he and all the people that were with him. And he built there an altar, and called the place El-beth-el : because there GOD appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother.

And GOD appeared unto Jacob again when he came out of Padan-aram ; and blessed him.

And GOD said unto him, Thy name is Jacob : thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name ; and he called his name Israel.

And GOD said unto him, I am GOD ALMIGHTY ; be fruitful and multiply ; a nation and a company.

of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins.

And the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land.

And GOD went up from him in the place where he talked with him.

And Jacob set up a pillar in the place where GOD talked with him, even a pillar of stone: and he pouered a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon, and called the place Bethel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As the son of Isaac, and the grandson of Abraham, Jacob had received many blessings; but he had lately been made a *Prince* under the title of *Israel*, and as such, was to give a name to a people. He wisely considered that a *people*, unless under the guidance and protection of GOD, can have no security; his first care, therefore, on his arrival in that country, which was destined to be the future inheritance of his descendants, was to purchase a piece of ground for the express purpose of consecrating it to the LORD; here he built an altar, that he might occasionally assemble his family to join in those sacrifices, which, as has been already observed, made a part of the religion of the Patriarchs; but it seems he did not fully accomplish his design.

At this place Jacob might have lived very happily; for the people of the adjacent country were extremely courteous to him: but, through the indiscretion of his daughter Dinah, an unhappy difference arose between the Shechemites and Jacob's sons; in which the latter behaved with such outrageous cruelty,

cruelty, as brought an odium upon the whole family; so that Jacob began to fear a conspiracy would be raised against him by the rest of the Canaanites, and on this account, resolved to remove. While he was deliberating where to fix his habitation, he received a Divine command to go to Bethel. Jacob well remembered his solemn vow, that if he returned in peace, he would consider the pillar which he set up at Bethel as *God's House*.

It has been related, that Rachel brought away her father's idols, which she kept carefully concealed; it is not unlikely, but that Leah and her handmaids might have secreted others; and it is very probable, that when Jacob's sons destroyed the city of Shechem, the captives they took, carried away some of theirs.—Now as Jacob had promised, that the LORD should be his only GOD, if ever he returned to Bethel, it would have been a violation of his vow, had he suffered any thing to remain in his family that might have been held in any degree of competition with the LORD; he therefore desired them, “to put away the strange gods that were among them.” He also required them to wash their bodies, and change their garments: thus intimating, that an entire purification was necessary, in order to their becoming the peculiar people of GOD.

How happy must Jacob have been, when the LORD appeared to him at Bethel, and again pronounced him a *Prince of GOD*, giving him likewise the blessing of Abraham!—It was an additional satisfaction to him, to know for a certainty, that the LORD was the ALMIGHTY GOD.

It is impossible to obtain an exact idea of Jacob's pillar; some commentators suppose, that the covenant made between the LORD and Jacob was inscribed on it.—It is most likely, that the ceremonies Jacob used were of Divine appointment.

The conclusions suggested by this section are, that the LORD is true to his promises, and omnipotent to perform

them ;—that his favour comprehends all the blessings of life, and if so, that it is our truest interest to seek it ; and that when his blessings are showered down upon us, it is our duty to acknowledge, and be thankful for his goodness.

S E C T. XLII.

THE DEATHS OF RACHEL AND ISAAC.

AND they journeyed from Bethel ; and it came to pass that Rachel bare another son, and his father called him Benjamin ; and Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem.

And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave : that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar.

And Jacob came unto Isaac his father unto Mamre, unto the city of Arbah (which is Hebron) where Abraham and Isaac sojourned.

And the days of Isaac were an hundred and four-score years : and Isaac gave up the ghost and died, and was gathered unto his people, being old and full of days : and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

And Esau took his wives, and his sons, and his daughters, and all the persons of his house, and his cattle, and all his beasts, and all his substance, which he had got in the land of Canaan ; and went
into

into the country, from the face of his brother Jacob.

For their riches were more than that they might dwell together: and the land wherein they were strangers, could not bear them, because of their cattle. Thus dwelt Esau in mount Seir: Esau is Edom.

And Jacob dwelt in the land wherein his father was a stranger, in the land of Canaan; and the sons of Jacob were twelve, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Joseph, and Benjamin; and his daughter's name was Dinah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Rachel had, with uncommon solicitude, desired an increase of family: little did she think that the completion of her wishes would prove fatal to herself! Jacob felt the most poignant grief at the death of a wife so beloved; but this misfortune served to exercise his patience.

It must have been a great consolation to Jacob, once more to behold his aged father; and, without doubt, the good old Patriarch sincerely rejoiced at the return of his son; especially when he found, in the increase of Jacob's family and riches, an earnest of the accomplishment of *all* the Divine promises.

Soon after Jacob's return, Isaac was released from this mortal life; and (as we conclude from the expression, *gathered to his fathers*) his soul was received into the state of rest appointed for the departed spirits of good men.

It

It appears, that Esau, as the eldest son, had for his portion the greatest part, if not all, of his father's riches in the land of Canaan, which he took away with him to Seir; and that Jacob was left in Canaan, to encrease his substance by the Providence of God. The Scripture informs us, that the descendants of Esau soon multiplied into a powerful nation called the Edomites, which had many kings, long before * there was any king in Israel.

The twelve sons of Jacob, mentioned in this section, were the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, as will be seen in the succeeding part of this history.

From the misfortune which befel Jacob, in the loss of his wife, so soon after he was reconciled to his brother, and had received a confirmation of the blessing of Abraham, we learn to reflect, that no human felicity is permanent. The ALMIGHTY, who knows *what is in man*, vouchsafes to encourage His servants to the performance of their duty, by setting before them promises of reward, and granting them many favours; and when they are in danger of becoming too confident of their own strength, or too much attached to the things of this world, He calls them back to a sense of their mortal state by afflictions.

Isaac seems to have had a very good heart; and, in respect to his *faith*, he was *exemplary*; especially if we suppose him to have been consenting to the sacrifice of himself, in obedience to God's command; but, it must be acknowledged, that his character was not *perfect*; for some things are recorded of him, which we cannot but condemn. It is no uncommon thing for scoffers to reject, nay even to deride, the example of the Patriarchs, because they erred in some particular instances: should we not rather rejoice to find, that they were men of like infirmities with ourselves, as this circumstance encourages us to copy them in such parts of their conduct, as gained them the Divine favour?

* Gen. xxvi. 31.

S E C T. XLIII.

JOSEPH SOLD BY HIS BRETHREN.

JOSEPH being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brethren, and the lad was with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives : and Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.

Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a coat of many colours.

And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.

And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it his brethren : and they hated him yet the more.

And he said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed : for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf.

And his brethren said unto him, Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us? and they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words.

And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream

dream more; and behold, the sun and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.

And he told it to his father and to his brethren; and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee, to the earth?

And his brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying. And his brethren went to feed their father's flock in Shechem.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them. And he said unto him, Here am I.

And he said to him, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy brethren, and well with the flocks; and bring me word again. So he sent him out of the vale of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.

And a certain man found him, and behold, he was wandering in the field; and the man asked him, saying, What seekest thou?

And he said, I seek my brethren: tell me, I pray thee, where they feed their flocks?

And the man said, They are departed hence: for I heard them say, Let us go to Dothan. And Joseph went after his brethren, and found them in Dothan.

And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him
to

to slay him. And they said one to another, Behold this dreamer cometh.

Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands; and said, Let us not kill him: and Reuben said unto them, Shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him; that he might rid him out of their hands, to deliver him to his father again.

And it came to pass when Joseph was come unto his brethren, that they stript Joseph out of his coat, his coat of many colours that was on him: and they took him, and cast him into a pit: and the pit was empty, there was no water in it.

And they sat down to eat bread; and they lift up their eyes and looked, and behold a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, and our flesh: and his brethren were content.

Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen: and they drew and lift up Joseph out of the pit, and
fold

fold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.

And Reuben returned unto the pit; and behold Joseph was not in the pit: and he rent his clothes. And he returned unto his brethren, and said, The child is not; and I, whither shall I go?

And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood: and the coat of many colours, they brought to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son's coat or no?

And he knew it, and said, It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces.

And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.

And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him: but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son, mourning: thus his father wept for him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The sons of Jacob were not all the children of one mother; for, according to the custom of the age he lived in, this Patriarch had several wives, viz. Leah and her handmaid Zilpah; Rachel and her handmaid Bilhah. As there were jealousies and dissensions among the women, it is most likely that their children formed parties adverse to each other. Unfortunately for Joseph, he related some things to
his

his father, of which his brothers wished to keep him ignorant.

We are told, that Jacob's partiality to Joseph was on account of his being *the son of his old age*. This could not be the case; because there was an equal reason for his giving a preference to Zebulun; and much more for loving Benjamin better than either of them, as he was 15 years younger; but critics tell us, that this text is not translated according to the Hebrew idiom, and that it should have been rendered, *because he was a wise and prudent son**.

A learned commentator also informs us, that Joseph's coat, which is in our translation called *a coat of many colours*, might be denominated *a long garment*; and is supposed to have been made down to the heels or ancles, with a border at the bottom, and long sleeves down to the wrist, turned up with the same as the border; which was in ancient times accounted both a noble and honourable dress.

It is evident, that Jacob had a tender solicitude for the welfare of his other sons, or he would not have sent Joseph to enquire after them; and it is apparent, that Joseph himself had an affection for his brethren, by his being so ready to go, and so diligent in seeking them.

Joseph's dreams certainly were from God, and were pre-
sages of his future greatness. It was usual, in the early ages of the world, (before there were *Scriptures* especially) for the LORD to make known future events, by a kind of revelations, which are sometimes denominated *visions of the night*. These were very different from common dreams.

Little did poor Joseph think, when the vanity of a youthful heart led him to relate his dreams to his brethren, that he was furnishing food for their envy!

* Stackhouse on the Bible; also Essay for a new Translation of the Bible.

If the sons of Jacob even supposed that Joseph *invented* the dreams, it was very unjust to think of punishing him with death : and if they really thought that he was divinely inspired, it was impious to attempt to frustrate the purpose of the ALMIGHTY.

Reuben, who was the son of Leah, and Jacob's first-born, seems to have been of a more liberal turn of mind than Joseph's other brethren. It seems that he did not remain with the rest.

How shocking it is to read, that, after having stripped their brother, and thrown him into a pit, they sat down to eat, though they had witnessed the anguish of his soul, and heard his earnest entreaties that they would have compassion on him ! Judah seems to have abhorred the sin of fratricide ; but so far agreed with the rest, that he wished the object of their mutual envy to be removed out of the way.

The Midianitish merchant-men are supposed to have been some of the descendants of Midian, one of the sons of Abraham and Keturah ; and the Ishmaelites were of the posterity of Ishmael. These travellers seem to have associated together for safety and society, as is still the custom in those eastern countries, which are infested with wild beasts and robbers. Their arrival at this critical period was a providential interposition.

Rending the cloaths appears, from several passages of Scripture, to have been the ancient way of expressing grief for calamity, or sorrow for sin.

Jacob's affliction for the loss of his son was very natural ; yet he was certainly wrong in *refusing to be comforted*, and in resolving to *mourn to the day of his own death* ; but we may suppose that he made use of these expressions in the first transports of his grief, and afterwards patiently submitted to what he supposed to be the will of God.

It is needless to expatiate on the wickedness of Joseph's brethren ; but it may be necessary to point out to *young persons*

sens, that they should be very careful not to carry *evil reports* of each other to their parents. Joseph's imprudence in telling tales, and his father's in listening to them, seem to have furnished his brethren with the first pretence for openly expressing their hatred of him: not that this justifies their malice; for *they* were men of experience in the world, and ought to have excused Joseph in consideration of his *youth*. Besides, it is a very great meanness to indulge *envy* on any occasion.

Young persons may farther learn from the error of Joseph, that it is exceedingly dangerous to boast of superior advantages. No one indeed can expect, like him, to have Divine revelations; but they may chance to have distinctions of another kind, from which they may promise themselves advancement in the world; in these cases, they should be extremely cautious not to provoke jealousy and envy in the minds of their relations, by exulting over them.

It is shocking to think, that it should ever enter into the hearts of men, *to sell and buy each other for slaves!* Yet how many people are there still existing in the world, who follow this inhuman traffick, with as much composure as Jacob's sons did. One party receiving money in exchange for those, who, if not brethren by *blood*, are so by *nature*; the other tearing away a promising youth, or helpless virgin (the sole comfort perhaps of their aged parents)—a wife from her beloved and affectionate husband,—a tender mother from her darling child, never never more to meet again the dear objects of their best affections; but condemned, for the remainder of their wretched lives, to the vilest drudgery, the most inhuman cruelty, and the hardest fare!—O that such *unnatural merchandizers* would but reflect on the anguish of mind they occasion! Anguish, which rankles in the soul, more than an envenomed and barbed arrow in the flesh!

S E C T. XLIV.

JOSEPH CAST INTO PRISON.

AND Joseph was brought down to Egypt ; and Potiphar an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hand of the Ishmaelites, which had brought him down thither.

And the LORD was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man ; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian.

And his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD made all that he did to prosper in his hand.

And Joseph found grace in his sight, and he served him : and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand.

And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake : and the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had, in the house, and in the field.

And he left all that he had in Joseph's hand ; and he knew not ought he had, save the bread which he did eat : and Joseph was a goodly person, and well-favoured.

And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph ; and she said, Lie with me. But he refused, and said unto his master's wife,

wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; there is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?

And it came to pass as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her.

And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business; and there was none of the men of the house there within.

And she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out.

And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us, to mock us: he came in unto me to lie with me, and I cried with a loud voice: and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out.

And she laid up his garment by her, until his lord came home.

And she spake unto him according to these words, saying, the Hebrew servant which thou hast brought unto us, came in unto me to mock me: and it came
to

to pass, as I lifted up my voice and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled out.

And it came to pass when his master heard the words of his wife, which she spake unto him, saying, After this manner did thy servant to me; that his wrath was kindled.

And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound: and he was there in the prison.

But the LORD was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favour in the sight of the keeper of the prison.

And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison: and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.

The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hand; because the LORD was with him: and that which he did, the LORD made it to prosper.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though Joseph's cruel brethren sold him into the hands of strangers, who carried him far from that sacred spot, where the LORD was worshipped as the only GOD; and into a country rendered abominable by the practice of many corruptions; yet was he not forsaken, or abandoned.—In the anguish of his soul, he cried unto the LORD, and He heard him; and though infinite wisdom saw fit to try his virtues, that he might prove a bright example to the world, Divine goodness accompanied him whithersoever he went; for we may regard it

it as an instance of GOD's providential care, that he did not fall into the hands of a cruel master.

We may reasonably conclude, from the blessing which attended Joseph's services, that (like his father Jacob when an hireling to Laban) he resolved that *his righteousness should answer for him for the time to come.**

It appears that Potiphar, though an Egyptian, had a knowledge of the LORD; and an idea of a particular providence, by his perceiving that a Divine blessing attended the services of Joseph, and by the trust which, in consequence of this conviction, he reposed in him. It is likely that Joseph was not invested with the stewardship, 'till Potiphar had experienced his fidelity in an inferior capacity; during which period he might attain a knowledge of the Egyptian language, which bore great affinity to that of Canaan.

The expression, *He knew not what he had, save the bread which he did eat*, implies the highest degree of confidence.

It is a sad reflection, that a man of so much merit as Potiphar appears to have been, should have had so abandoned a woman for his wife!—Her behaviour needs no comment; every virtuous person who reads an account of it, must condemn and despise her, for dishonouring her husband, and disgracing her sex.—On the other hand, how amiable does the conduct of Joseph appear!

It was very natural for Potiphar to believe his wife's tale; and considering the provocation which he supposed Joseph had given him, he shewed great lenity in only committing him to prison.—For such a crime, he would have been justified in the eye of the world, had he put Joseph immediately to death.

What a dreadful reverse of fortune did Joseph experience! Instead of enjoying the friendship and confidence of a kind master, he was regarded as a monster of ingratitude.—The

* See Section 35.

fair character he had enjoyed in the world, was blasted.—Ease and plenty were exchanged for the horrors of a dungeon. His feet were hurt in the stocks; and the iron of his cruel chains, rivetted by calumny, entered into his very *soul* *.

How pleasing it is to read in the same chapter, that the LORD extended his kindness to the injured youth, and lessened the evils of imprisonment!—As we are told that there was an interposition of Providence in his favour, we may conclude, that the LORD graciously inclined the heart of the keeper to believe the account which Joseph gave of himself; and that the same behaviour which had before gained him the confidence of Potiphar, through the blessing of GOD, procured him that of his keeper.

Fortunate were those who were committed to Joseph's care; and happy was he, in the opportunities he had of exercising the benevolence of his heart, by comforting and doing good offices to his fellow prisoners!

Whether Potiphar was afterwards convinced of Joseph's innocence or not, we are not told; but as he was an officer of high rank, we may suppose that the keeper would otherwise have been fearful of giving such indulgence as he did, to a prisoner committed to strict confinement for such an atrocious offence against Potiphar himself.

From this section we learn, to ascribe prosperity in our worldly concerns to GOD.—As the LORD was with Joseph, so may we hope he will be with every one, who reposes a sincere trust in Him, and conscientiously discharges the duties of his station.—We also learn, in moral actions, to have a becoming reverence for the DEITY. Were Joseph's reflection, *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against GOD*, allowed to have its due influence, it would be found an excellent preservative against a dissolute course

* Pf. cv. 18.

of life; for no one, who feels an inward esteem for God, will dare to violate his laws.—Domestics may, from Joseph's example, derive encouragement to serve their masters with fidelity and uprightness.—This is the most likely way to gain the good will and confidence of their employers; the certain way to obtain the favour of the LORD:—persons in particular, who are unexpectedly reduced to a state of servitude, may from hence conceive hopes, that, by a steady course of integrity, they shall obtain esteem, and find their situation much more comfortable than could have been expected.

Masters may conclude, from this instance, that it is their interest to commit the management of their household affairs to persons of a religious turn of mind.

What an excellent lesson does this portion of Scripture afford to such youths as are exposed to the allurements of wanton women!—Happy would it be for thousands, should they take example from Joseph.

Persons who are injured by calumniators, are encouraged by this part of Sacred History, to submit with patience to such evils as their traducers may bring upon them; since they may rest assured of the mercy and favour of God, which will immediately alleviate their sufferings, and inspire them with hopes of a final deliverance.

S E C T. XLV.

THE DREAMS OF THE BUTLER AND BAKER.

AND it came to pass after these things, that Pharaoh, King of Egypt, was wroth against two of his officers, against the chief of the butlers, and against the chief of the bakers.

And he put them in ward in the house of the captain of the guard, into the prison, the place where Joseph was bound.

And the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he served them, and they continued a season in ward.

And they dreamed a dream, both of them, each man his dream in one night, each man according to the interpretation of his dream: the butler and the baker of the king of Egypt, which were bound in the prison.

And Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold they were sad. And he asked Pharaoh's officers that were with him in the ward of his lord's house, saying, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?

And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? tell me them I pray you.

And

And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said unto him, In my dream, behold, a vine was before me: and in the vine were three branches: and it was as though it budded, and her blossoms shot forth; and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes.

And Pharaoh's cup was in my hand: and I took the grapes, and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand.

And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days:

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thine head, and restore thee unto thy place: and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand, after the former manner when thou wast his butler.

But think on me when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me; and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house.

For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews: and here also have I done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon.

When the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and behold I had three white baskets on my head.

And in the uppermost basket there was of all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket upon my head:

And Joseph answered and said, This is the interpretation thereof ; the three baskets are three days :

Yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee.

And it came to pass the third day, which was Pharaoh's birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants ; and he lifted up the head of the chief butler, and of the chief baker, among his servants.

And he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again ; and he gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand :

But he hanged the chief baker ; as Joseph had interpreted to them. Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The manner in which Joseph accosted his fellow prisoners, Pharaoh's butler and baker, shews, that he felt a benevolent solicitude for their happiness. The dreams which they had, were undoubtedly from God, sent, as we shall soon perceive, to answer particular purposes of His Providence, but chiefly to lead to the deliverance and advancement of Joseph.

The Egyptians were a very superstitious people, and dealt much with magicians, who pretended to the power of foretelling future events, and interpreting dreams ; and we may suppose, from the expression, *there is no interpreter*, that Pharaoh's officers wished for an opportunity of consulting one of those sages. Joseph's reply indicated that he did not believe human arts could enable any person whatever to interpret dreams ; and he seems to have been suddenly inspired with

with a persuasion that God would make known to *him* the import of those which now disturbed the minds of the chief butler and baker.

Joseph's request, that the butler would recommend him to the clemency of Pharaoh, was not at all inconsistent with the most firm trust in God; for he had no reason to expect miracles to be wrought in his favour, when his deliverance might be effected, under the Divine, blessing by human means.

It must have been a severe trial to Joseph, to be ranked with the vilest of mankind; and therefore we cannot wonder that he took every opportunity of attesting his innocence.

It is needless to say that there was great ingratitude in the butler's forgetfulness of Joseph; particularly as he knew by his own experience, both the horrors of imprisonment, and the joy of liberation.

The will of God is now so fully made known to Christians by the publication of the Scriptures, and these sacred volumes contain such a variety of examples and warnings, that we have seldom occasion for intimation by dreams, and therefore it is best to pay no attention to the nocturnal ramblings of the mind; for if, as Joseph observes, *interpretations are of God*, it must be very presumptuous in any *human being* to attempt to explain them: and should God see fit to affect our minds in an extraordinary manner, by a dream on any particular occasion, he will, doubtless, by the same instinctive power, direct us to the right understanding of it*.

* I will not take upon me absolutely to assert, that *all* dreams are *insignificant*, but in general they certainly are so; and unless accompanied with an irresistible impulse, to do or avoid something which has a direct tendency to promote our own *good*, or that of others, we may be sure *it is not of God*. Every suggestion to *wickedness*, is to be ascribed to the *evil one*, and as such should be resisted.

S E C T. XLVI.

JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS.

AND it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed a dream, and his spirit was troubled ; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise-men thereof : and Pharaoh told them his dream ; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day. Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker.

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he, we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard : and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams ; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was : me he restored unto my office, and him he hanged.

Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon ; and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold I stood upon the bank of the river. And behold, there came up out of the river, seven kine, fat-fleshed and well-favoured; and they fed in a meadow.

And behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness. And the lean and the ill-favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine.

And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill-favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I slept and dreamed the second time.

And I saw in my dream, and behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good. And behold, seven ears, withered, thin and blasted with the east-wind, sprung up after them.

And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it unto me.

And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream of Pharaoh is one: God had shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

The seven good kine are seven years ; and the seven good ears are seven years ; the dream is one.

And the seven thin and ill-favoured kine that came up after them, are seven years : and the seven empty ears blasted with the east-wind, shall be seven years of famine.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh. What GOD is about to do, he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt. And there shall arise after them seven years of famine ; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt : and the famine shall consume the land.

And the plenty shall not be known in the land, by reason of that famine following : for it shall be very grievous.

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh ; it is because the thing is established by GOD, and GOD will shortly bring it to pass.

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

And

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled; only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck.

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee; and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah : and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt : and Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities : the food of the field which was round about every city laid he up in the same.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering : for it was without number.

And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came : which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On, bare unto him.

And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh : for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

And the name of the second called he Ephraim : for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

And the seven years of plenteousness that was in the land of Egypt were ended.

And

And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said : and the dearth was in all lands : but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread : and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph ; what he saith to you, do.

And the famine was over all the face of the earth : and Joseph opened all the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians : and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn ; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The magicians whom Pharaoh consulted, are supposed to have been persons who had great skill in astronomy. The Egyptians had very particular use for this Science, on account of the inundation of the river Nile. In that country it seldom rains ; but every year at a particular season, the river swells and overflows its banks, and continues to do so for about 40 days, and then subsides ; leaving behind a kind of mud, or slime, which enriches the earth to such a degree, that it becomes immediately fit for vegetation ; and little labour is required from the husbandman, to produce a plentiful harvest : in some years the inundation (as the overflowing of the river is called) is not sufficient, which occasions great scarcity, because the natural soil of Egypt is very sandy.

In

In the early ages of the world, before mankind had had much experience, or writing was invented, there were many particulars necessary to be known, in order to ascertain the seasons at which different parts of the earth should be cultivated. It was very material in Egypt, for instance, to be prepared for the inundation, an event of the utmost importance to the inhabitants of that country; and it is supposed that this led the Egyptians to observe the motions of the stars, that they might know how the year passed by the appearance of the heavens; as they discovered that the stars succeeded in regular rotation. There is one very bright star, called the Dog-star, which appears in Egypt early in the morning, just before the time of the inundation; and there are a variety of other circumstances in the motions of the celestial bodies that required the particular attention of the antient Egyptians, which, in all probability, give rise to the appointment of a set of persons called magicians, whose business it was to study the motion of the stars, and by their revolutions to inform the unlearned when they might expect the inundation.

Those persons, who were unacquainted with the science of astronomy, must certainly have entertained a very high opinion of these magicians; and finding that they could give them such important instruction, began to suppose them capable of fortelling future events by supernatural power, and even of working miracles. We may conclude that they were the most learned men in the kingdom; and therefore it is easy to account for Pharaoh's having recourse to them, when his mind was so greatly disturbed.

Pharaoh's butler seems to have recollected his promise to Joseph, with great compunction of mind. How much was his present kindness invalidated by his former forgetfulness!

Before Sacred History afforded *precedents*, it seems to have been sometimes the method of Providence, to give by dreams, intimation to Kings concerning remarkable events that were
to

to happen in the world. We may reasonably conclude, that from the time of the deluge, such a famine as was now approaching, had not been known. We may also conjecture, that it was not designed for a *judgment* on the *king* of Egypt, but on the *people* of that and the adjacent nations; from which may be inferred, that Pharaoh had greater reverence for GOD than his subjects had, whatever erroneous notions he might have imbibed, through a wrong education. Joseph was evidently sent as a messenger of *peace* to him.

The dreams of Pharaoh were such, that the art of man could not investigate them; yet without them, Pharaoh would not have been induced to send for Joseph; neither would he have known a truth of great importance in a country where superstition prevailed, *that interpretations come from GOD*. We may add, that in all probability Pharaoh would have neglected to gather into store-houses, or the people might have been remiss in sowing grain, after a few years of such astonishing abundance; the consequences of which would have been fatal to thousands. Or they might have supposed the plenty and famine to have been the effects of mere natural causes, instead of looking up to GOD as the author of them.

Joseph's advice, though perfectly agreeable to *reason*, was the result of *Divine revelation*. A man like him, remarkable for humility, and just released from a prison, would scarcely have ventured to offer his own sentiments so freely to an august monarch. According to the constitution of the nation, a tenth part of the product of the country was the king's right; and we may suppose that the rest, which was laid by in store-houses, he *purchased*. A fifth part of the corn was afterwards found adequate to the deficiencies of the years of famine; for it is to be considered, that, besides the king's stores, the rich people of the land had it in their power, during the years of plenty, to lay by a great deal, after having supplied their quota to government; and we may suppose

pose that the earth itself, while the dearth lasted, yielded a small quantity.

Pharaoh's determination to follow Joseph's counsel, was perfectly consistent with a steadfast belief in GOD; and the honours he heaped on him, shewed a firm trust in the Divine promises. The name which was given to Joseph, signifies a *prime minister*. Without imputing ambition to Joseph, we may account for his accepting this post by supposing, that in so doing he followed a Divine impulse.

The knowledge of the true GOD was not totally lost among the Egyptians at this time; for it is strongly intimated that they believed in the HOLY SPIRIT; but in what manner they paid their adorations to the SUPREME BEING, we do not know: it is supposed that they made use of *symbols* to express his *attributes*. Even this was a great corruption of the religion of Noah; but not so bad as what they were afterwards guilty of, in setting up *imaginary deities*, in competition with the LORD. Had Potiphra been an idolator of the last description, we have reason to think no temptation would have prevailed on Joseph to form an alliance with him; and it will be shewn in a following Section, that he did not entirely conform to the customs of the Egyptians: therefore we may conclude, that he practised the religion of his fathers, as much as it was in his power to do in a foreign land. We are told that "the LORD was with *Joseph*," which would scarcely have been the case, if he had forsaken the LORD.

Joseph soon, by his great activity, convinced Pharaoh, that in appointing him as prime minister, he had made a judicious choice.

How merciful was GOD in so ordering events that abundance should precede scarcity!

While Joseph continued in prison, he recollected with regret, the comforts of his father's house; but his exaltation

was

was now so great, and his means of doing good so enlarged, that he thought it his duty to settle his mind entirely to his present situation. Pharaoh appears to have continued very steadfast in his attachment to Joseph. What a dreadful situation would he and his people have been in, had not the LORD so wonderfully interposed for their relief.

In this Section we have a fresh instance to warn us against human attempts to interpret dreams.—In short, they usually admit of no interpretation at all, because they are the mere sports of fancy, or rather the *remnants of ideas*, which have before passed in the mind.

Kings are instructed by this portion of Scripture, to seek out as ministers, men not only “*discreet and wise*,” but those “in whom the SPIRIT of GOD is;” that is to say, persons who regulate their lives in all the relative duties, by the revealed will of GOD.—From the example of Joseph, Ministers may learn, that they should, in the management of public affairs, consult the welfare of both king and people, and establish such laws as may give their country consequence with other nations. The Subjects of a kingdom are led from this portion of Scripture to consider it as an interposition of Providence in their favour, when they have righteous rulers, and private persons are admonished in the time of affliction, to place their trust and confidence in GOD, who can so order events, as, by a happy reverse of fortune to make them forget all their former sorrows, and bless them with prosperity in the height of their affliction.

S E C T. XLVII.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

NOW when Jacob knew that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another?

And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get ye down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die.

And Joseph's ten brethren went down to buy corn in Egypt. But Benjamin, Joseph's brother, Jacob sent not with his brethren: for he said, Lest peradventure mischief befall him.

And the sons of Israel came to buy corn among those that came: for the famine was in the land of Canaan.

And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph's brethren came and bowed down themselves before him, with their faces to the earth.

And Joseph saw his brethren, and he knew them, but made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them; and he said unto them, Whence come ye? and they said, From the land of Canaan, to buy food.

And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. And Joseph remembered the dreams which he dreamed

dreamed of them, and said unto them, Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land you are come.

And they said unto him, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are thy servants come. We are all one man's sons; we are true men, thy servants are no spies.

And he said unto them, Nay, but to see the nakedness of the land you are come.

And they said, Thy servants are twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not.

And Joseph said unto them, That is it that I spake unto you, saying, Ye are spies.

Hereby ye shall be proved; by the life of Pharaoh, ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither.

Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether there be any truth in you: or else, by the life of Pharaoh, surely ye are spies.

And he put them altogether into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live: for I fear God.

If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison: go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses: But bring your youngest brother unto me: so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die. And they did so.

And

And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us.

And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore behold also, his blood is required.

And they knew not that Joseph understood them; for he spake unto them by an interpreter.

And he turned himself about from them, and wept: and returned to them again, and communed with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes.

Then Joseph commanded to fill their sacks with corn, and to restore every man's money into his sack: and to give them provision for the way: and thus did he unto them.

And they laded their asses with the corn, and departed thence. And as one of them opened his sack to give his ass provender in the inn, he espied his money: for behold it was in his sack's mouth.

And he said unto his brethren, My money is restored; and lo, it is even in my sack: and their heart failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, What is this that God hath done unto us?

And they came unto Jacob their father, unto the land of Canaan, and told him all that befel unto them, saying,

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The man who is the lord of the land, spake roughly to us, and took us for spies of the country. And we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies.

We be twelve brethren, sons of our father: one is not, and the youngest is this day with our father in the land of Canaan.

And the man, the lord of the country, said unto us, Hereby shall I know that ye are true men: leave one of your brethren here with me, and take food for the famine of your households, and be gone:

And bring your youngest brother unto me: then shall I know that ye are no spies, but that ye are true men; so will I deliver you your brother, and ye shall traffic in the land.

And it came to pass as they emptied their sacks, that behold every man's bundle of money was in his sack: and when both they and their father saw the bundles of money, they were afraid.

And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.

And Reuben spake unto his father, saying, Slay my two sons, if I bring him not to thee: deliver him into my hand, and I will bring him to thee again.

And he said, My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is left alone: if mischief befall him by the way in the which ye go, then shall

shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

In times of public calamity, the minds of men are frequently struck with a kind of consternation that prevents their making any exertions for their own relief: This seems to have been the case with Jacob's sons.—“The famine was sore in the land,”—the labours of the husbandman were ineffectual,—the LORD had withdrawn his blessing, and the wretched inhabitants of Canaan were in danger of perishing, for want of sustenance.—Utterly at a loss for expedients in this dreadful emergency, Joseph's brethren “looked on each other” with fearful expectation, not knowing which of them would first feel the dire effects of this afflicting evil.

Jacob had an habitual trust in the Divine Promises; nor did the LORD disappoint his hopes, but shewed that “He was with him whithersoever he went.” In the present instance, we may regard it as a proof of this providential care, that Jacob should so early hear that “there was corn in Egypt.”

It appears that this Patriarch indulged the same kind of partiality for Benjamin, as he formerly did for Joseph; but there is this excuse to be made for him, that his other sons were in a manner separated from him, having families of their own, while Benjamin was his constant companion.

The land of Egypt was extremely well fortified by nature, and in danger of incursions only in that quarter which lay nearest to Canaan. Joseph had therefore a very good pretence for challenging his brethren as *spies*.—His words may be construed as a sort of interrogation, *Are ye not spies?* The answer which they made, furnished a very good reason why they

they should not be regarded as such ; for it was scarcely probable, that a man would send so many of his own sons on so dangerous an expedition ; or that the brethren of one family should undertake it, without other associates.

Joseph's expression, *By the life of Pharaoh*, is not to be considered as an *oath*, but as a vehement asseveration, signifying *As surely as Pharaoh lives*.—We should reflect that the occasion was sudden ; and that his mind was violently agitated.

As the governor of Egypt, Joseph was in a very critical situation.—He had great reason to suspect that his brethren had not told him truth in regard to Benjamin ; and supposing that they had murdered him, it would have been a flagrant act of injustice to let them escape unpunished ; but though Joseph committed them to prison, there is no account of any cruelties inflicted on them during their confinement.—It would have been very wrong, had he owned them at once ; for had they proved as wickedly inclined as formerly, he could not for his reputation's sake have continued his protection to them, or lived on the terms of brotherly love.

It was very natural that Joseph should feel a particular affection for Benjamin, as he was the son of his own mother, and therefore more nearly related to him, than the rest of his brethren ; besides most of the others were much older than himself ; and they had all the time he lived with them, regarded him with a jealous eye, and treated him unkindly ; so that he must have had uncommon goodness of heart, to have felt so much tenderness for them, as his subsequent behaviour displays.

We have reason to suppose, that after mature deliberation, Joseph resolved to keep one only of his brothers as a hostage, and leave the event to Providence. Had the brethren been at liberty, three days at least would have been necessary to rest themselves, and their cattle, and transact their business ;

so

so that Jacob, and that part of his family who remained with him in Canaan, did not suffer by their detention.

In the confession which they made to each other, we may perceive the natural effects of wicked actions---those reproaches of conscience which are ever ready to torment the guilty. It must have been a great consolation to Reuben, at this time, to think, that he had endeavoured to prevent what the others now so justly deplored.

It is evident, from Joseph's emotion, that he did not take these measures from a principle of cruelty or revenge. We may suppose, from his choice of Simeon, that he regarded him as the chief instigator to the cruelties which had been exercised on himself; and therefore most likely to be guilty in respect to Benjamin.---The Jews have a tradition, that as soon as the others were gone, Simeon was released from his fetters, and treated with the utmost lenity.

Joseph's returning the purchase-money, may be imputed to two reasons; a desire of proving the integrity of his brethren; and a willingness to relieve gratuitously the necessities of his relations.---The inns, in those days, afforded no refreshment, but merely house-room and lodging.

By this section, we are instructed, that in times of dearth and scarcity, the inhabitants of a country should not sit down in supine dejection, "looking at one another;" but make diligent enquiry, whether it is not possible to procure a supply from some foreign land.---It also contains a powerful warning to all persons, against the perpetration of wicked actions; since, however secretly committed, they leave a sting in the conscience; and when known, bring suspicion upon the authors of them, in cases in which they are perfectly blameless.

S E C T. XLVIII.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

AND the famine was sore in the land. And it came to pass when they had eaten up the corn which they had brought out of Egypt, their father said unto them, Go again, buy us a little food.

And Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, saying, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

If thou wilt send our brother with us, we will go down and buy thee food : but if thou wilt not send him, we will not go down : for the man said unto us, Ye shall not see my face, except your brother be with you.

And Israel said, Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me, as to tell the man whether he had yet a brother ?

And they said, The man asked us straitly of our state, and of our kindred, saying, Is your father yet alive? have ye another brother? and we told him according to the tenor of these words : could we certainly know that he would say, Bring your brother down ?

And Judah said unto Israel his father, Send the lad with me, and we will arise and go : that we may live and not die, both we, and thou, and also our little ones :

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I will be surety for him : of my hand shalt thou require him : if I bring him not unto thee, and set him before thee, then let me bear the blame for ever. For except we had lingered, surely now we had returned this second time.

And their father Israel said unto them, If it must be so now, do this : take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds ; and take double money in your hand : and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand ; peradventure it was an oversight.

Take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man : and GOD ALMIGHTY give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin : if I be bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.

And the men took that present, and they took double money in their hand, and Benjamin ; and rose up, and went down to Egypt, and stood before Joseph.

And when Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the ruler of his house, Bring these men home, and slay, and make ready : for these men shall dine with me at noon.

And the man did as Joseph bade ; and the man brought the men into Joseph's house.

And

And the men were afraid because they were brought into Joseph's house; and they said, Because of the money that was returned in our sacks at the first time, are we brought in; that he may seek occasion against us, and fall upon us, and take us for bondmen, and our asses.

And they came near to the steward of Joseph's house, and they communed with him at the door of the house, and said, O sir, we came indeed down at the first time to buy food, and it came to pass when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and behold every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight: and we have brought it again in our hand. And other money have we brought down in our hands to buy food: we cannot tell who put our money in our sacks.

And he said, Peace be to you, fear not: your God, and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks: I had your money: and he brought Simeon out unto them.

And the man brought the men into Joseph's house, and gave them water, and they washed their feet: and he gave their asses provender.

And they made ready the present against Joseph came at noon: for they heard that they should eat bread there.

And when Joseph came home, they brought him the present which was in their hand into the house, and bowed themselves to him to the earth.

And he asked them of their welfare, and said, Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?

And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive: and they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance.

And he lift up his eyes, and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, Is this your younger brother, of whom ye spake unto me? and he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son.

And Joseph made haste, for his bowels did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep: and he entered into his chamber and wept there?

And he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself, and said, Set on bread.

And they set on for him by himself, and for them by themselves, and for the Egyptians which did eat with him by themselves; because the Egyptians might not eat bread with the Hebrews: for that is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

And they sat before him, the first born according to his birth-right, and the youngest according to his youth: and the men marvelled one at another.

And he took and sent messes unto them from before him; but Benjamin's mess was five times so much as any of theirs. And they drank, and were merry with him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is an appearance of undutifulness in Judah's refusal to go down into Egypt at his father's command; but we should consider the situation he was in.—Jacob felt the force of his son's remonstrances, and was convinced that Judah insisted upon Benjamin's accompanying him, not from a principle of disobedience, but prudence and necessity. The present which he sent, consisted of the choicest produce of the land of Canaan.

Though Jacob at first had suffered his affection for one child to make him unmindful of what was due to the rest of his family, he soon recollected his duty, and resigned his affairs to the disposal of Providence.

It is evident that Joseph's detention of Simeon proceeded from a distrust that he had dealt treacherously with his youngest brother; for as soon as he was convinced that Benjamin was safe, he found it difficult to restrain the effusions of his tenderness towards all of them.—With what anxious solicitude did he enquire after his aged parent! With what affection did he behold his mother's son! Not one unkind or harsh expression did he utter, but entertained his brethren with the utmost hospitality.—Prudence suggested that a farther trial of them was necessary, before he placed confidence in them, and therefore he refrained himself, but the pain which it cost him to do so, the sacred historian has most pathetically expressed. Well might his brethren, a company of shepherds, be astonished, at being treated with so much ceremony and respect in the palace of a Vice-roy! How condescending and engaging must Joseph's behaviour have been, which encouraged his brethren, under such circumstances, to *be merry with him*.

It is likely that the Egyptians possessed that illiberal spirit which prevails too much among the lower kinds of Englishmen, of regarding foreigners as persons of an inferior species to themselves; and that this was the ground of that abomination in which they held the Hebrews.

The manner of eating among the antients, was, to have a number of small dishes set before the master of the feast, who distributed to each guest his portion.—A *double* mess was the usual mark of distinction.

From this section, we learn, that it is adviseable in extraordinary cases, for parents to comply with the remonstrances of their children, if the latter have had experience in the world, rather than to insist upon an implicit obedience in matters where their affections may lead them wrong.—Before they determine to follow their own opinion in favour of one child, they should carefully consider whether their doing so will be consistent with their duty to the rest.

Whenever the interests of persons who have an equal claim to consideration, seem to interfere, it is the best way for heads of families to imitate Jacob's example, and pursue the measure which present exigencies require, for the good of the *whole*, leaving the care of *individuals* to Divine Providence.

S E C T. XLIX.

JOSEPH AND HIS BRETHREN.

AND Joseph commanded the steward of his house, saying, Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put every man's money in his sack's mouth; and put my cup, the silver cup, in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and his corn-money: and he did according to the word that Joseph had spoken.

As soon as the morning was light, the men were sent away, they and their asses.

And when they were gone out of the city, and not yet far off, Joseph said unto his steward, Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them, Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good?

Is not this it in which my Lord drinketh? and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

And he overtook them, and he spake unto them these same words. And they said unto him, Wherefore saith my lord these words? God forbid that thy servants should do according to this thing,

Behold, the money which we found in our sack's mouths, we brought again unto thee out of the land of Canaan: how then should we steal out of thy lord's house silver or gold?

With whomsoever of thy servants it be found, both let him die, and we also will be my lord's bondmen. And he said, Now also let it be according unto your words : he with whom it is found shall be my servant : and ye shall be blameless.

Then they speedily took down every man his sack to the ground, and opened every man his sack. And he searched, and began at the eldest, and left at the youngest : and the cup was found in Benjamin's sack.

Then they rent their clothes, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And Judah and his brethren came to Joseph's house ; (for he was yet there) and they fell before him on the ground.

And Joseph said unto them, what deed is this that ye have done ? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine ?

And Judah said, what shall we say unto my lord ? what shall we speak ? or how shall we clear ourselves ? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants : behold, we are my lord's servants : both we, and he also, with whom the cup is found.

And he said, God forbid that I should do so ; but the man in whose hand the cup is found, he shall be my servant ; and as for you, get you up in peace unto your father.

Then Judah came near unto him, and said, Oh, my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not thine anger burn against thy servant ; for thou art even as Pharaoh.

My

My lord asked his servants, saying, Have ye a father, or a brother? And we said unto my lord, We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one: and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Bring him down unto me, that I may set mine eyes upon him.

And we said unto my lord, The lad cannot leave his father: for if he should leave his father, his father would die.

And thou saidst unto thy servants, Except your youngest brother come down with you, ye shall see my face no more.

And it came to pass when we came up unto thy servant my father, we told him the words of my lord.

And our father said, Go again, and buy us a little food. And we said, We cannot go down: if our youngest brother be with us, then will we go down: for we may not see the man's face except our youngest brother be with us.

And thy servant, my father said unto us, Ye know that my wife bare me two sons: And the one went out from me, and I said, Surely he is torn to pieces; and I saw him not since:

And if ye take this also from me, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Now therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad be not with us : (seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life ;)

It shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die ; and thy servants shall bring down the gray hairs of thy servant our father with sorrow to the grave.

For thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame to my father for ever.

Now therefore I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bond-man to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren.

For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me ? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him : and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me : and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren.

And he wept aloud : and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph ; doth my father yet live ? and his brethren could not answer him : for they were troubled at his presence.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you ; and they came near : and he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt.

Now

Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.

For these two years hath the famine been in the land: and yet there are five years, in the which there shall neither be earing nor harvest.

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.

Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not.

And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast.

And there will I nourish thee; (for yet there are five years of famine;) lest thou and thy household, and all that thou hast come to poverty.

And behold, your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is my mouth that speaketh unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that ye have seen: and ye shall haste, and bring down my father hither.

And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

As Joseph had formed a design for the benefit of his relations, and could not by any other means obtain intelligence, whether his brethren were deserving of his intended kindness, he was perfectly justified in making the experiment he did. The circumstance he particularly wanted to know, was, whether they really loved Benjamin, and would protect him at all events. It must doubtless have given him the greatest degree of satisfaction to find, that they not only repented of their crime towards himself, but were strictly just in their mercantile concerns, and tenderly attached toward each other.

Joseph's question, *Wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?* is not to be understood as if he practised magical arts, or was constantly inspired: it is rather a proof that he was liable to human infirmities, which led him to make use of this artifice, in order to intimidate his brethren. It may be observed by the by, that this was not consistent with Joseph's usual wisdom, because the very charging them with a theft which they had not committed, shewed his brethren, that, in one instance at least, his divination was false.

Judah was at a loss what reply to make. He might justly have pleaded, that there was a juggle in the whole transaction from beginning to end; but having no advocate to support his cause, he was afraid to do this. He therefore in ambiguous terms, acknowledged the consciousness of guilt which oppressed the minds of himself and brothers, and the conviction

conviction accompanying it, that their affliction was from God.

What a pathetic scene now ensued, and how powerfully did Judah plead!—Never was a tale related with more pathetic eloquence than this! No wonder that Joseph, whose heart was agitated with the tenderest emotions, could no longer refrain himself! Who but a sacred penman, inspired to describe the workings of nature, by Him to whom all hearts are open, could have conveyed to the world such a lively representation of this memorable event?

Having tried his brethren as much as was necessary for their justification, and his own satisfaction, Joseph nobly resolved to make them amends for the sufferings he had inflicted, by freely forgiving the personal injuries he had received from their hands; and henceforth to consider what had happened, as a dispensation of Providence, to which his brothers had been instrumental. Nothing could be more generous than his kind endeavours to quiet their consciences; for though God in his infinite mercy over-ruled their designs, their cruelty towards him was the result of their own wicked inclinations; they were actuated by human passions, not compelled by divine power.

What happiness must Joseph have enjoyed in the ability of removing his father from a state of famine, to ease and affluence!—and how great must be the felicity of all parties at this perfect restoration of family harmony!

This portion of Scripture affords a striking picture of filial affection and duty—Judah was more concerned for his father's happiness, than for his own safety: Joseph could no longer refrain from discovering himself, when he knew the painful uncertainty that Jacob endured.—In this respect they are worthy of imitation; for those who have with anxious care, reared a family, have an undoubted right to their tenderest regards. Old age is subject to many infirmities;
and

and it should be the study of every child not to add to these sufferings, but to lessen them as much as possible.—How dreadful is the idea of “bringing down the gray hairs of a parent with sorrow to the grave!”

Fraternal affection is also strongly enforced by the examples of both Judah and Joseph. In the first, we behold an elder brother acting as the guardian and protector of a younger one. In the other, a forgiveness of injuries, and a participation of benefits, with a view to encreasing the happiness of an honoured parent, and with a desire of promoting the general prosperity of the family.

An useful lesson of *worldly prudence* is also conveyed in this portion of Scripture; namely, that it is the *interest* of brethren to live in friendship and harmony, as the success of one, may lead to the advantage of all. Happy would it be, if these considerations were allowed their due weight with all Christians!

S E C T. L.

DEPARTURE OF JOSEPH'S BRETHREN.

JACOB AND HIS FAMILY SETTLE IN EGYPT.

AND it was heard in Pharaoh's house, saying, Joseph's brethren are come: and it pleased Pharaoh well, and his servants.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Say unto thy brethren, This do ye: lade your beasts, and go get ye into the land of Canaan;

And take your father, and your households, and come unto me; and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land.

Now

Now thou art commanded, this do ye; take you waggons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father, and come.

Also regard not your stuff, for the good of all the land of Egypt is yours. And the children of Israel did so: and Joseph gave them waggons, according to the commandment of Pharaoh, and gave them provision for the way.

To all of them he gave each man changes of raiment: but to Benjamin he gave three hundred pieces of silver, and five changes of raiment.

And to his father he sent after this manner; ten asses laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten she-asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father by the way.

So he sent his brethren away, and they departed: and he said unto them, See that ye fall not out by the way. And they went up out of Egypt, and came into the land of Canaan, unto Jacob their father,

And told him, saying, Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not.

And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived.

And Israel said, It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die.

And

And Israel took his journey, with all that he had, and came to Beer-sheba, and offered sacrifices unto the GOD of his father Isaac.

And GOD spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob; and he said, Here am I. And he said, I am GOD, the GOD of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt, for I will there make of thee a great nation.

I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

And Jacob rose up from Beer-sheba; and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the waggons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

And they took their cattle, and their goods which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him.

His sons, and his sons sons with him, his daughters, and his sons daughters, and all his seed, brought he with him into Egypt.

All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, besides Jacob's sons wives, were threescore and six: And the sons of Joseph which were born to him in Egypt, were two souls. In all threescore and ten*.

And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen: and they came into the land of Goshen.

* Reckoning Jacob himself, and Joseph.

And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him: and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive.

And Joseph said unto his brethren, and unto his father's house, I will go up, and shew Pharaoh, and say unto him, My brethren and my father's house, which were in the land of Canaan, are come unto me:

And the men are shepherds; for their trade hath been to feed cattle: and they have brought their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have.

And it shall come to pass when Pharaoh shall call you, and shall say, What is your occupation?

That ye shall say, Thy servants trade hath been about cattle, from our youth even until now, both we, and also our fathers: that ye may dwell in the land of Goshen: for every shepherd is an abomination unto the Egyptians.

Then Joseph came and told Pharaoh, and said, My father, and my brethren, and their flocks, and their herds, and all that they have, are come out of the land of Canaan: and behold, they are in the land of Goshen.

And he took some of his brethren, even five men, and presented them unto Pharaoh.

And

And Pharaoh said unto his brethren, What is your occupation? and they said unto Pharaoh, Thy servants are shepherds, both we, and also our fathers.

They said moreover unto Pharaoh, For to sojourn in the land are we come; for thy servants have no pasture for their flocks; for the famine is fore in the land of Canaan: now therefore, we pray thee, let thy servants dwell in the land of Goshen.

And Pharaoh spake unto Joseph, saying, Thy father, and thy brethren, are come unto thee:

The land of Egypt is before thee: in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity amongst them, then make them rulers over my cattle.

And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou?

And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, the days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and I have not attained unto the days of the years of the lives of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh.

And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best

best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

And Joseph nourished his father and his brethren, and all his father's household, with bread, according to their families.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The immediate attention which king Pharaoh paid to Joseph's brethren, shows the high esteem he had for him; and the ready concurrence of his officers proves, that Joseph had executed the trust reposed in him, so as to gain their good opinion.

Pharaoh, on this occasion, displayed a truly royal munificence, and an earnest desire to do honour to a man, who deserved so well of his king and country.

Not content with dispensing the gifts of Pharaoh, Joseph added others, as testimonies of dutiful respect to his father, and of affection to all his brethren. There was a very good reason for his distinguishing Benjamin above the rest, as has been already observed.

The admonition which Joseph gave to his brethren, not *to fall out by the way*, was spoken, as it seems, in kindness, not by way of reproach. A quarrel would most likely have occasioned their separation, in which case, his benevolent designs, which included *all*, would have been frustrated.

How affecting it is to read the account which is here given of the return of Jacob's sons!

It is likely that the good old patriarch had promised himself the comfort of ending his days in the Land of Promise; and at his time of life, a change of situation must have been very disagreeable to him; however, parental affection overcame all obstacles.

Jacob

Jacob does not seem to have had any particular pleasure in reflecting on Joseph's exaltation and riches ; it was enough for this affectionate father, that his long lost son was yet alive. He had no wish so great as that of beholding him once more before he died.

It was by the express command of GOD, that Jacob fixed his abode in Canaan ; and we may suppose that he was acquainted with the prediction spoken by the LORD to Abraham. *Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land which is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years **. Therefore, when he was required to remove with all his family into Egypt, it was natural for him to have dread and apprehensions. The present situation of his affairs was critical ; and however indifferent it might be to him individually in what part of the world he should reside, for the short remainder of his days, as *Heir of the Promises*, it was of material consequence to obtain direction from GOD : with this view we may suppose, as well as to testify his gratitude, the patriarch offered sacrifices at Beer-sheba, which was in the way to Egypt, and the utmost borders of Canaan to the south.

It must have been a great consolation to Jacob to have his fears quieted by a Divine Promise, before he took his last farewell of that country in which he was born, and on which his hopes respecting the future prosperity of his family were fixed.

With what beautiful simplicity has the sacred historian described the interview between Joseph and his father !—It evidently appears, that neither grandeur or riches had any charms for Jacob ; all the affections of his soul were at that instant collected together in the fulness of paternal love.—He felt in that happy moment, consolation for years of sorrow, the height of human felicity ; and was contented

* Gen. xv. 13.

to resign his life, since he had attained the summit of his desires.

“ * The land of Goshen was situated in the eastern parts of Egypt, between the Red Sea and the River Nile, upon the borders of Canaan. It was a fruitful spot, every way fit for pasturage. This country was separate from Egypt, and on this account, particularly desirable to the Israelites, as they might keep themselves in a body without endangering their religion or manners, by mixing with the Egyptians, and without incurring their envy or odium, as they would have done had they lived among them, and shared any power or profit in the government. They were also very conveniently fixed for returning into Canaan, whenever it should please GOD to command them to leave Egypt.

“ The country of Egypt was divided into three parts, of which the priests had one, the king the second, and the soldiery a third; but under these there were three other ranks of men, shepherds, husbandmen, and artificers. The husbandmen served the king, and the other two orders in tilling the ground for very small wages, and so did the shepherds in their capacities. It cannot therefore be thought that the Egyptians held shepherds in general in abhorrence, but merely such as were foreigners; which aversion probably arose from the great oppression and tyranny they had endured from the Phœnician shepherds, who had before penetrated into their country, made great devastations, and for a considerable time kept possession of it. But, upon whatever account it was, we must consider it as a great instance of Joseph's modesty and love of truth, that he was not ashamed of an employment so mean in itself, and so vile in the eyes of the Egyptians. It is observable, that he did not boast of his descent from *Abraham, a mighty prince, or Israel, a prince of GOD*: his pleasure and ambition were to show forth the

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

wonderful goodness of God, in bringing him from so low a condition in life, to such power and grandeur.

The post to which Pharaoh appointed Joseph's brethren, was an honourable one, in reference to the occupation which they had themselves made choice of.

In what terms Jacob pronounced a blessing on Pharaoh, we are not told; but may conclude, that he expressed gratitude for the benefits conferred on himself and his family, and wished the king prosperity and happiness.

If we reflect on the various calamities which had befallen Jacob, since he first left his father's house, we may easily conceive why he said his days had been evil: he had not yet attained to the age of his progenitors.

It is remarkable, that in his answer to Pharaoh, Jacob called his life a *pilgrimage*; and we find from several texts of Scripture *, that the Patriarchs, and other good men, considered themselves as *strangers* and *so-journers upon earth*. This idea the Apostle to the Hebrews enlarges upon, and observes †, that those who confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims, plainly declared, that they sought a country, which, he observes, could not be that from which they came out, because, to that they might have returned; but they sought a *better*; that is to say, an *heavenly country*. It may be inferred, that Jacob's hopes were actually fixed upon an heavenly state, since he was not at all elated with the prosperity that smiled upon him, neither did he lament his leaving Canaan.

Joseph's happiness must have been very great, in seeing his venerable parent, and all his relations, so happily settled around him.

From Joseph's advice to his brethren, *see that ye fall not out by the way*, a very instructive lesson may be learnt. How frequently does it happen, that children of the same family

* Ps. xxxix. xii. cxix. xix.

* Heb. xi. xiii. xiv. &c.

disagree

disagree concerning the gifts or legacies bestowed by a relation, if one among them has a larger portion than the rest. These contentions are not likely to benefit any; on the contrary, such animosities destroy that concord which is of greater value than much treasure; and prevent the intercourse of good offices, which affords more substantial pleasures, than riches can purchase.

The lesson may be extended farther; for if Christians in general consider human life as a *pilgrimage*, surely it must appear the height of folly, to fall out with their fellow-travellers by the way, about straws and pebbles; when they are journeying towards a country where treasures of inestimable value will be bestowed on each of them, if they love one another as their Heavenly Father requires.

S E C T. LI.

THE EGYPTIANS SELL THEMSELVES TO
PHARAOH.

AND there was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore; so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine.

And Joseph gathered up all the money that was found in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, for the corn which they bought: and Joseph brought the money into Pharaoh's house.

And when money failed in the land of Egypt, and in the land of Canaan, all the Egyptians came unto Joseph, and said, Give us bread; for why should we die in thy presence? for the money faileth.

And

And Joseph said, Give your cattle ; and I will give you for your cattle, if money fail.

And they brought their cattle unto Joseph : and Joseph gave them bread in exchange for horses, and for the flocks, and for the cattle of the herds, and for the asses : and he fed them with bread, for all their cattle, for that year.

When that year was ended, they came unto him the second year, and said unto him, we will not hide it from my lord, how that our money is spent, my my lord also hath our herds of cattle ; there is not ought left in the sight of my lord, but our bodies and our lands.

Wherefore shall we die before thine eyes, both we and our land ? buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh : and give us seed, that we may live and not die, that the land be not desolate.

And Joseph bought all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh ; for the Egyptians sold every man his field, because the famine prevailed over them : so the land became Pharaoh's.

And as for the people, he removed them to cities from one end of the borders of Egypt, even to the other end thereof.

Only the land of the priests bought he not ; for the priests had a portion assigned them of Pharaoh, and did eat their portion which Pharaoh gave them : wherefore they sold not their lands.

Then

Then Joseph said unto the people, Behold, I have bought you this day, and your land for Pharaoh : lo, here is seed for you, and ye shall sow the land.

And it shall come to pass in the increase, that you shall give the fifth part unto Pharaoh, and four parts shall be your own, for seed of the field, and for your food, and for them of your households, and for food for your little ones.

And they said, Thou hast saved our lives : let us find grace in the sight of my lord, and we will be Pharaoh's servants.

And Joseph made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day, that Pharaoh should have the fifth part ; except the land of the priests only, which became not Pharaoh's.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It evidently appears, that the famine in the land of Egypt was designed as a judgment on the *people*, not on the *king* ; for while the former were reduced to slavery, the latter was raised to the highest pitch of affluence.

On a superficial view, Joseph seems to have had a partial regard for the king ; but we find that the people complied *willingly* with his requisition, and there is no doubt but that he did right, as he was in this matter guided by unerring wisdom. In respect to the cattle, they were a burden to the Egyptians, if they had no pasturage ; and the extremities of famine would have reduced the people to live entirely upon flesh, which would have been hurtful to their constitutions ; therefore, by giving them corn in exchange, Pharaoh certainly conferred an immediate benefit upon his subjects.

N

What

What is in this Section called the *second* year, was, in reality, the last year of the famine. It is to be observed, that the Egyptians *voluntarily* offered to resign their lands, and sell themselves as slaves to Pharaoh; and it will be found, that in making the purchase, he had their welfare in view. We may suppose, by Joseph's removing them from their usual abodes, that there were some irregularities among them that required a reform.

The priests of Egypt consisted of all the nobility of the land; they filled the chief offices in the government, and it is likely had shewn a dutiful attachment to their sovereign; therefore Pharaoh might be actuated by gratitude, as well as veneration, when he forbore to reduce them to a state of slavery.

It is apparent that Joseph had the good of the people at heart, as well as that of the king; for no sooner had the former submitted, as the exigencies of the state required, than he restored them their liberties, and allotted them a portion of land, with a right to cultivate it for their own advantage, reserving only a fifth part for the expences of government; a tax which so fertile a country as Egypt could very well bear; especially as it required but little trouble or charge to cultivate it. This measure appeared very reasonable to the Egyptians, who, sensible that they could not have managed so well for themselves, gratefully ascribed the preservation of their lives to their humane governor.

Joseph's conduct in this character affords an excellent example to persons intrusted with the administration of public affairs. His situation was very critical, but the wisdom of his plans, and his equity in the execution of them, obtained him the esteem of all parties.

S E C T. LII.

THE DEATH OF JACOB.

AND Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years: so the whole age of Jacob was an hundred forty and seven years.

And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt.

But I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place: and he said, I will do as thou hast said.

And he said, Swear unto me: and he swear unto him. And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head.

And it came to pass after these things, that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick; and he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim.

And one told Jacob, and said, Behold thy son Joseph cometh unto thee: and Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

And Jacob said unto Joseph, GOD ALMIGHTY appeared unto me at Luz in the land of Canaan, and blessed me,

And said unto me, Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a multitude of people; and will give this land to thy seed after thee, for an everlasting possession.

And now thy two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, which were born unto thee in the land of Egypt, before I came unto thee into Egypt, are mine: as Reuben and Simeon they shall be mine.

And thy issue which thou shalt have after them, shall be thine, and shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

And as for me when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan, in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath: and I buried her there in the way of Ephrath, the same is Beth-lehem.

And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said, Who are these? And Joseph said unto his father, They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place: and he said, Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them.

Now the eyes of Israel were dim for age, so that he could not see well: and Joseph brought them near unto him; and Jacob kissed them, and embraced them.

And

And Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see thy face : and lo, God hath shewed me also thy seed.

And Joseph brought them out from between his knees, and he bowed himself with his face to the earth.

And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand toward Israel's left hand, and Manasseh in his left hand toward Israel's right hand, and brought them near unto him.

And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head : guiding his hands wittingly : for Manasseh was the first-born.

And he blessed Joseph, and said, God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, The angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads ; and let my name be named on them, and and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac : and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.

And when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him ; and he held up his father's hand, to remove it from Ephraim's head, unto Manasseh's head.

And Joseph said unto his father, Not so, my father : for this is the first-born ; put thy right hand upon his head.

And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.

And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim, and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh:

And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

Moreover, I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword, and with my bow.

And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.

Gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob; and hearken unto Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my first born; the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power; unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.

Simeon and Levi are brethren: instruments of cruelty are in their habitations:

O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall:

Curfed

Curfed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and fcatter them in Ifrael.

Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren fhall praife; thy hand fhall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children fhall bow down before thee:

Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my fon, thou art gone up; he ftooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who fhall rouse him up?

The fceptre fhall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto him fhall the gathering of the people be.

Binding his fole unto the vine, and his afs's colt unto the choice vine; he wafhed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes;

His eyes fhall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Zebulun fhall dwell at the haven of the fea; and he fhall be for a haven of fhips: and his border fhall be unto Zidon.

Iffachar is a ftrong afs, couching down between two burdens.

And he faw that reft was good, and the land that it was pleafant; and bowed his fhoulder to bear, and became a fervant unto tribute.

Dan fhall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Ifrael:

Dan fhall be a ferpent by the way, an adder in the path; that biteth the horfes-heels, fo that his rider fhall fall backward.

I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.

Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties.

Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words.

Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him.

But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob: from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:

Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee, and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb.

The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of thy progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.

All these are the twelve tribes of Israel: and this is it that their father spake unto them, and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them.

And he charged them, and said unto them, I am to be gathered unto my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite.

In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite, for a possession of a burying-place.

And when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people.

And Joseph fell upon his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him.

And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father; and the physicians embalmed Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Divine Promise made by the LORD to Jacob, that *He would be with him whithersoever he went*, was remarkably fulfilled in Egypt, both in respect to the encrease and prosperity of his family: but the good old patriarch's mind was fixed on Canaan, and his urgent desire to be buried there, may be considered as a proof of his belief in the Divine

promises. It was also a very prudent request to be interred in the cave of Machpelah, as it was calculated to answer the purpose of keeping up in the minds of his descendants, a wish and expectation of returning to Canaan at GOD's appointed time.

The expression, *Israel bowed himself*, seems to relate to some form or ceremony used on this occasion.

Though Joseph had obtained such an uncommon share of riches and honours in Egypt, and doubtless had great possessions to bequeath to his children, he esteemed the *blessing of the LORD* as the most valuable portion they could enjoy; and with the view to obtain it for them, he took his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh with him, when, in consequence of the summons he had received, he went to attend his dying father.

If Jacob had not incorporated Joseph's sons into his own family, and bequeathed to their posterities an inheritance in the land of Canaan, disputes might afterwards have arisen between their descendants and those of Jacob's other sons: the latter would, in all probability, have considered the former as *Egyptians*. And Ephraim and Manasseh themselves might, from a predilection for their native country, have prejudiced their children in favour of it. Jacob appears to have cherished a tender remembrance of his dear wife Rachel; and he mentioned with seeming regret, that the circumstances he was in, when she died, prevented his burying her in the cave of Machpelah.

In the preference given to Ephraim, we have an additional proof of the foreknowledge of the SUPREME BEING; for in pronouncing the blessing on them, Jacob evidently spake by Divine inspiration. This blessing related only to the temporal state of their posterities.

Jacob was at this time in the very circumstances in which Isaac was, when he pronounced the paternal blessing on him,

him, old and dim-sighted ; the remembrance of his father's inadvertency, in all probability, made him particularly circumspect.

It is remarkable, that Jacob calls the GOD before whom his fathers walked, (and whom he had just before stiled GOD ALMIGHTY) the ANGEL that redeemed him from all evil, and sustained him. By recollecting the various revelations that were made to this patriarch, we shall find, that he did not allude to any *created being*, but to the LORD Himself, who was the only visible author of his deliverance and sustenance. The portion which Jacob gave to Joseph, as his own particular bequest, was the field which he purchased of Hamor the father of Shechem. It is likely that the Amorites seized upon this when Jacob went to settle at Beth-el; and that on account of the altar which he had erected there, he resolved to recover it out of their hands ; and though no warrior, the patriarch might be enabled to succeed in this enterprize by the aid of the LORD.

We may suppose that all the sons of Jacob were present at the time the blessing was given upon Ephraim and Manasseh ; for it was necessary that they should hear from their father's own mouth, the LORD's will concerning them, otherwise they might have disputed their right to be considered as heads of tribes, or might have blended their posterities together, under the title of the tribe of Joseph.

The blessings he pronounced when his sons surrounded his bed, were predictions concerning the future state of their posterities, which have been explained by their completion, as will be observed in a future part of the History of the Israelites. It is sufficient to observe at present, that Judah was to have the pre-eminence. By SHILOH is to be understood the *promised seed* ; and we shall find that from the time king David, who was of the tribe of Judah, was settled upon the throne, till the coming of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST,

Judah possessed some degree of sovereignty over the rest of the Jewish nation.

The patriarch Abraham had several sons; but one only received the promise of the inheritance of the land of Canaan. Isaac had two, but the youngest of them was sole heir of the promises. The numerous family of Jacob promised a great increase; and it was the Divine will that they should incorporate together, and form one people under the denomination of Israelites; the inheritance therefore was portioned out among them. The peculiar blessing respecting the *Everlasting Covenant* was the lot of Judah; on which account he was to have the sovereignty. It will afford great amusement to observe the gradual accomplishment of these predictions.

There is something extremely edifying in Jacob's death. With the utmost composure did he expect his latter end; his soul seems to have been strengthened by the hopes of those blessings which were reserved *beyond the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills* for him, and all the nations of the earth, through the promised Redeemer. It is needless to descant on the character of this Patriarch; every attentive reader may discover from the events of his life, that he was a man of like infirmities with the rest of human kind, but eminent for his faith and piety; and, on account of these, supported under severe conflicts, sometimes by the visible appearance of the LORD, sometimes by the secret influences of the Holy Spirit. Let it be our earnest prayer, that we may be enabled to imitate this faithful servant of GOD in every perfection, and that the same LORD who redeemed him from all evil, and sustained him, may also save and support us in all dangers, spiritual and temporal.

S E C T. LIII.

THE FUNERAL OF JACOB.

AND forty days were fulfilled for Jacob (for so are fulfilled the days of those which are embalmed;) and the Egyptians mourned for him three-score and ten days.

And when the days of his mourning were past, Joseph spake unto the house of Pharaoh, saying, If now I have found grace in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh, saying,

My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan, there shalt thou bury me. Now therefore let me go up, I pray thee, and bury my father, and I will come again.

And Pharaoh said, Go up and bury thy father, according as he made thee swear.

And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh, the elders of his house, and all the elders of the land of Egypt.

And all the house of Joseph, and his brethren, and his father's house: only their little ones, and their flocks, and their herds, they left in the land of Goshen.

And there went up with him both chariots and horsemen: and it was a very great company.

And

And they came to the threshing-floor of Atad, which is beyond Jordan, and there they mourned with a great and very fore lamentation; and he made a mourning for his father seven days.

And when the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, saw the mourning in the floor of Atad, they said, This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians: wherefore the name of it was called Abel-mizraim, which is beyond Jordan.

And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them.

For his sons carried him into the land of Canaan and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field, for a possession of a burying-place, of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.

And Joseph returned into Egypt, he and his brethren, and all that went up with him to bury his father, after he had buried his father.

And when Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him.

And they sent messengers unto Joseph, saying, Thy father did command before he died, saying,

So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.

father. And Joseph wept when they spake unto him.

And his brethren also went and fell down before his face : and they said, Behold we be thy servants.

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not ; for am I in the place of God ?

But as for you, ye thought evil against me ; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as is it this day, to save much people alive.

Now therefore fear ye not : I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find, that Joseph, like a dutiful son, fulfilled the dying request of his honoured and lamented parent ; and followed his dear remains with every circumstance of respect that affection could suggest, or his own princely rank required in the eye of the world. Embalming was an honour usually paid to the deceased in the land of Egypt ; the manner of performing it was this : the bowels were taken out, washed, and secured from putrefaction by some powerful drugs, the whole body was anointed with oil of cedar, with myrrh, cinnamon, and other costly things, for about thirty days, by which means it was preserved entire, without so much as losing the hair ; after this, it was put in salt of nitre forty days ; lastly, the body was taken out of the salt, washed and curiously wrapped in very fine lawn dipped in myrrh, and rubbed with a certain gum that the Egyptians used instead of glue ; then it was put into a coffin, on the upper

per part of which was represented the deceased person ; it was also adorned with other curious embellishments ; the nearest relations usually kept them in their houses. Bodies thus preserved, are called mummies ; and there are many remaining to this day, though the custom of embalming has long been discontinued.

As Joseph had engaged to carry his father to such a distance, it was very necessary he should use every precaution for preserving the body, because it would have been, before they arrived at the cave of Machpelah, in such a state of putrefaction, as would have endangered the healths of the attendants on the funeral solemnity ; besides, it is necessary in many instances, for foreigners to comply with the customs of a country they have long resided in.

It certainly must have been a painful office, for Joseph and his brethren to follow their dear father's remains so many miles ; sometimes we may suppose them shedding tears of tender sorrow, for the loss of so affectionate a friend, recollecting a thousand instances of parental love ; sometimes contemplating his character in those instances which procured him the favour of God, and drawing comfort from the hopes, that he enjoyed this ineffable blessing in a superlative degree ; elevating their own souls with ardent wishes to obtain the same glorious reward, and forming resolutions to follow the example of their pious parent.

When they had performed the funeral rites, and deposited the body by the venerable remains of his honoured ancestors, Joseph returned, attended by his brethren, to the land of Egypt ; for he would neither break his promise to Pharaoh, nor desert the office he had been appointed to, as the whole land of Egypt would have been thrown into confusion by his resignation, because there was not a person qualified to fill his place.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding the numberless instances which Joseph had given his brethren of his sincere affection and perfect forgiveness, they could not banish their fears, that his resentment, which might have been restrained by respect for his father, would break out again. So hard is it for a guilty conscience to be at rest ! Their hearts told them what offences they had committed against their brother in his helpless youth ; and they well knew, that they had no title to his affection, but what arose from the goodness of his own disposition. With what amiable tenderness did he receive their message, and afterwards assure them of his protection !

In this manner, should all people act towards their relations. If a brother or sister has offended, we should never suffer resentment to break out either in violent reproaches, or retaliation of injuries ; but seek out occasions of recalling their love, by acts of kindness and friendship. Let us think how often we offend God, who bestows more benefits on us, than we can possibly do on any creature. He forgives us ; we should then forgive one another.

S E C ' T . L I V .

T H E D E A T H O F J O S E P H .

AN D Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house : and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

And Joseph saw Ephraim's children, of the third generation : the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh, were brought up upon Joseph's knees.

And

And Joseph said unto his father's house, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land, unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt; and all that generation died.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Joseph was about 56 years old when his father died; and, we find, that he lived a long time after this. It is presumed, that he continued to the last in the high post, to which Pharaoh had appointed him. Whether any of his own brethren survived him, we are not told. Before his death, his father's house had multiplied greatly; and all these, according to the usage of the times, were called his brethren.

When the hour of his death approached, Joseph had, by Divine inspiration, a certain assurance of the accomplishment of the predictions made known to him by Jacob, that the Israelites would be settled at a future time in Canaan; and the command he gave, concerning his remains, is reckoned by the Apostle to the Hebrews, as a proof of his faith*.—Many reasons might restrain Joseph from desiring to be interred immediately after his decease in Machpelah: it certainly was best, on all accounts, that his bones should continue with the Israelites, as a pledge to assure them of return-

* Heb. xi. 22.

ing to the land of promise, and a mean of strengthening and confirming their faith.

From the eventful history of this Patriarch, we may infer, that “ * every situation in human life affords sufficient opportunities for the cultivation of virtuous habits, and the performance of good actions.” We also learn the value of virtuous and religious principles early sown, and deeply rooted in the heart.—From his father's house Joseph brought treasures, which, even in a state of slavery, he could call his own; and which procured for him what gold and silver could not have purchased—the favor of the LORD, and the esteem of mankind.” We are likewise instructed, that the fear of God, and a serious regard to his authority, is the best preservative against criminal indulgencies;—that adversity often proves the means of exaltation;—that the proper use of power and riches is to employ them in promoting the general happiness of mankind, and of our relations in particular; and that a stedfast reliance on Divine Providence will support the mind under the most afflicting evils that can possibly befall us.

* Dr. Enfield's Biographical Sermon on the Character of Joseph, Vol. 3.

S E C T. LV.

THE AFFLICTIONS OF THE ISRAELITES.
THE BIRTH OF MOSES.

AND the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them.

Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we.

Come on, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass that when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.

Therefore they did set over them task-masters, to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses.

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigour. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service
in

in the field: all their service wherein they made them serve, was with rigour.

And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born to the Hebrews, ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.

And there went a man of the house of Levi, whose name was Amram*, and took to wife a daughter of Levi, whose name was Jochebed†.

And the woman bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.

And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink.

And his sister stood afar off, to wit what should be done to him.

And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river: and her maidens walked along by the river's side: and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.

And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and behold the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrew's children.

Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee.

* Exod. vi. 20.

† Ibid.

And

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.

And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.

And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son, and she called his name Moses; and she said, Because I drew him out of the water.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The kings of Egypt were all called Pharaoh, though they had names besides: the monarch in whose reign Moses was born, came from another country, and had conquered the Egyptians: this accounts for his paying no respect either to the memory of Joseph, or the lawful establishment which the children of Israel had obtained by a royal grant from a former monarch; nor can we wonder that this king should be jealous of a people, who multiplied and flourished in so remarkable a manner.

The original word here translated *task-masters*, properly signifies *tax-gatherers*; and the *burdens* are afterwards mentioned as distinct things, under another name: so that the resolution of council was, to lay heavy tributes upon the Israelites to impoverish, and heavy burdens to weaken them. Among other laborious works, it is supposed they were employed in building the famous Pyramids, in testimony of the splendor of the kings of Egypt, and as repositories for the dead bodies of those proud and cruel monarchs.

The

The *treasure cities*, mentioned in this section, are said to have been the places in which the kings of Egypt, agreeably to the custom introduced by Joseph, laid up their stores of grain; but others conjecture that they were fortified cities.

What an inhuman wretch must Pharaoh have been, to command little innocent babes to be thrown into the river, unmindful of the pangs of their afflicted mothers!

The method which Jochebed employed to save her infant, proved, that she believed in the omnipotent power of God; for it was very unlikely that his life should be preserved in an ark of bulrushes; especially in a river filled by an inundation, which, perhaps, was at that time daily increasing, and of which the direful crocodile was an inhabitant.—Scripture teaches us to regard Jochebed in this instance as an example of faith*; and we may conceive that we behold her—*With invocations to the living God*,

Twisting together every slender reed,

And with a separate prayer each osier weaving†.

What her sensations were, when she consigned her dear babe to the watery element, let the fond mother imagine!

It must be regarded as an interposition of Providence, that Pharaoh's daughter should come to the place just at that juncture; and that she should commit the child to the care of his own mother. It was a great act of mercy in this princess to run such a hazard of incurring the displeasure of her cruel father, and the censure of the public; but *the babe wept*, and she could not resist the eloquence of its cries and tears:—she kindly redeemed him from the waves, and resolved to nurture him as her own, though he was of mean and ignoble birth, and sprung from a race of strangers despised by the Egyptians.

* Heb. xi. 23.

† Miss More's Sacred Dramas. It is needless to tell the *generality* of my readers, that this part of Sacred History is beautifully displayed in the work I refer to; but some may be obliged by the information.

With

With what transporting delight must Jochebed have received her son to her arms, after the terrors she had suffered on his account! By being reared under her eye, Moses had the advantage of learning, from the dawn of reason, to worship the true God.—The name which the princess gave to this her adopted son, signified *drawn out*. Moses was born in the year of the world 2434, and was about nine or ten years younger than his sister Miriam.

We are told in Scripture*, that Moses was afterwards educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Many arts and sciences are supposed to have been highly cultivated in Egypt at that period, particularly arithmetic, music, and hieroglyphics, otherwise called enigmatical philosophy. An ancient Jewish author† informs us, that Moses was instructed in all these; and another‡ says, that he was remarkable for the beauty of his person.

From the sufferings of the Israelites, related in this section, we may learn to be grateful to Divine Providence, for placing us in a land of freedom, under a mild government, where we have no tyranny to dread.

We may also learn, that no situation of life is so dangerous, but that Divine power can effect a deliverance. In the present state of the world, mothers are not under the hard necessity of exposing their infants, like Jochebed; but so numerous are the perils of childhood, that, without a firm trust in God, their lives must be a state of unremitting apprehension; they should therefore fortify their minds with the comfortable persuasion, that God is the parent of their offspring; that He constantly watches over children with tender love, and guards them from numberless unseen dangers, which the utmost vigilance cannot prevent.—The LORD has already redeemed them through His infinite mercy, and adopted them as his own children in the Christian

* Acts vii. 22.

† Philo.

‡ Josephus.

Covenant.

Covenant.—Let then the Christian parent, when she presses her little darling to her bosom, suppress the too anxious apprehension, and lift up her heart with thankfulness to God, that she is permitted and encouraged to perform the maternal duties with delight and tranquility!

Pharaoh's daughter, though a *heathen*, set an example worthy of the imitation of Christian ladies. May it excite them to use their utmost endeavours to rescue from destruction and ignorance, those poor babes, who, from the distressful circumstances of their parents, are exposed to as unhappy a fate as that which threatened Moses. However mean and ignoble their birth, none are beneath the notice and compassion of the highest of their species; and the present day affords a most favourable opportunity of exercising their benevolence to the greatest advantage, in a way unknown to former ages, by establishing and attending *Sunday Schools*.

S E C T. LVI.

MOSES FLIETH FROM EGYPT.

AND it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he espied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.

And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.

And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?

O

And

And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? and Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known?

Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.

Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock.

And the shepherds came and drove them away: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock.

And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to-day.

And they said, an Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock.

And he said unto his daughters, And where is he? Why is it that ye have left the man? call him, that he may eat bread.

And Moses was content to dwell with the man, and he gave Moses Zipporah his daughter.

And she bare him a son, and he called his name Gershom; for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Moses, as we learn from Scripture, continued to live in Pharaoh's court, till he was full forty years old *. He had not lost the prepossession which he had imbibed from his parents in favour of the Israelites ; it grieved him to behold their sufferings, and he seems to have been inspired by the LORD, with a persuasion that he should be the instrument of their deliverance ; in consequence of which, he formed a resolution to relinquish all the honours and pleasures that attended him as the adopted son of the king's daughter, and to partake of their affliction †, not doubting but that God would accomplish those Divine promises which had been made to his forefathers. Moses was very sensible that he should expose himself to reproach, by thus testifying his faith in deliverance by the LORD, but he esteemed these reproaches as more valuable to him than all the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the *eternal* reward of his fidelity. Strongly persuaded that he was the appointed deliverer of his people, Moses took upon himself to avenge one of his countrymen, who was cruelly treated by an Egyptian. He hoped that the Israelites would have confederated together ‡, in order to support his views ; but cruel bondage had subdued their spirits, and he looked around him in vain for auxiliaries. To preserve himself therefore from the rage of the Egyptians, he buried the body of the man whom he had slain, and suspended his purpose. When he shewed himself again the next day, instead of giving him thanks for his zeal, his brethren reproached him.—No wonder that his courage should now fail him, for what could he

* Acts vii. 23. † Heb. xi. 24, 25, 26. ‡ Acts vii. 25.

do singly against the Egyptians : and to what end should he hazard his life in favour of those who disdained his friendship? Egypt was no longer a place of safety and comfort for him, therefore the most prudent step he could take, was to flee away from it : not that he feared the wrath of the king, so as to apprehend he could frustrate the promises made to the patriarchs, but having as yet received no express directions from GOD, it would have been rashness to have proceeded farther than he had already done, in defence of his countrymen.

The Midianites were descendants of Midian, one of the sons of Abraham, and from Moses' fleeing to them, and making an alliance in the family of their priest, we may conjecture, that the true GOD still continued to be adored in Midian. Idolatry (as we may suppose) like other human inventions was *progressive*, and it is likely the first corruptions consisted in worshipping the SUPREME BEING Himself, with superstitious rites, representing his attributes by symbols, instead of honouring the LORD as GOD. These symbols being frequently misunderstood, gradually led to the belief of a plurality of GODS.

It is to be remarked, that inspired authors do not relate all the passages of a story, but only such as are most material ; we may therefore imagine, that a great many things intervened between Moses' entrance into the family of Reuel, and marrying his daughter.

It can scarcely be thought, that a person educated like Moses, should be contented with the simple occupation of a shepherd ; it is therefore no improbable conjecture, that he filled up some of his time in writing ; and that it was at this period he composed the Book of Job, and the Book of Genesis ; both of which were calculated to comfort the Israelites, in the trials they were afterwards exposed to.

To justify Moses from the imputation of murder, it may be proper to observe, that the Egyptians were cruel and unjust oppressors, and that the Israelites had no means of legal redress; under these circumstances, therefore, Moses might, surely, without committing sin, put an Egyptian to death, if he had no other way of preserving the life of one of his brethren.

From the example of Moses we learn to despise all worldly riches and honours, when they cannot be enjoyed without giving up our title to the Divine promises; and are also instructed to consult the ease and interests of others in preference to our own selfish gratification. “* The man who discovers by the whole course of his actions, that he lives for himself alone, is always beheld with contempt; while he who cheerfully foregoes his own private advantage, to procure more important benefits for others, is an object of general esteem and admiration. Where the benevolent principle is predominant, it will dictate a thousand acts of kindness, which would never have fallen in the way of the selfish man; it will point out innumerable opportunities of obliging and serving others in the common incidents of life, and will make the sincere christian as industrious in seeking, and as ready to embrace such opportunities, as the vainest person can be, to display his services before the world in the more splendid scenes of public action.”

* Dr. Enfield's Sermon on the Character of Moses. This Section would receive great advantage from a larger extract from this excellent discourse; but the limits of my work will not allow of it. I therefore beg leave to refer my young readers to the Sermon itself.

S E C T. LVII.

GOD APPEARETH TO MOSES. SENDETH HIM
AND HIS BROTHER AARON TO PHARAOH.

AND it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died : and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried ; and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage.

And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them.

Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian ; and he led the flock to the back-side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God : even to Horeb.

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush : and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.

And when the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And

And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face: for he was afraid to look upon God.

And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their task-masters; for I know their sorrows.

And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land, unto a good land, and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites.

Now therefore behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them.

Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.

And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?

And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee:

when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.

And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your father hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name; what shall I say unto them?

And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you; this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt.

And I have said, I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt, unto the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.

And they shall hearken to thy voice: and thou shalt come, thou and the elders of Israel unto the king of Egypt, and you shall say unto him, The

LORD

LORD GOD of the Hebrews hath met with us; and now let us go (we beseech thee) three days journey into the wilderness, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our GOD.

And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand.

And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders, which I will do in the midst thereof; and after that he will let you go.

And I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that when ye go, ye shall not go empty.

But every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians.

And Moses answered and said, But behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, the LORD hath not appeared unto thee.

And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? and he said, A rod.

And he said, Cast it on the ground: and he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent: and Moses fled from before it.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail: and he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand.

That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath appeared unto thee.

And the LORD said furthermore unto him, Put now thine hand into thy bosom; and he put his hand into his bosom: and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow.

And he said, Put thine hand into thy bosom again, and he put his hand into his bosom again, and plucked it out of his bosom; and behold, it was turned again as his other flesh.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign.

And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land: and the water which thou takest out of the river, shall become blood upon the dry land.

And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue.

And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD.

Now

Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

And he said, O my LORD, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart.

And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do.

And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.

And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs.

And Moses went and returned to Jethro his father-in-law, and said unto him, Let me go, I pray thee, and return unto my brethren which are in Egypt, and see whether they be yet alive. And Jethro said to Moses, Go in peace.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the king who had so cruelly reduced the Israelites to a state of bondage, died, we find they met with no redress: They had now suffered afflictions for a great number of years, and were on the brink of despair. We are not told for what cause God permitted them to be so oppressed,

but from the usual course of His dispensations we may judge that as a *nation* they had fallen off from their duty, so as not to consider the LORD as their only GOD, or worship him agreeably to his Divine appointment: It appears, however, that in their distress they cried unto the GOD of their fathers, who, of his grace and favour resolved to forgive their offences, and effect their deliverance in remembrance of his promise to his faithful servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Moses continued forty years in Midian, with Reuel, or Jethro, his father-in-law, and seems to have laid aside all thoughts of returning into Egypt.

Mount Horeb was so near to Mount Sinai, that they appeared to be different tops of the same mountain. It was usual for shepherds to travel from place to place, with their flocks and herds, as the want of pasture directed. Horeb is called by Moses, *the mount of GOD*, and, in all probability, in his time, it was known by that name, but there is no passage of Scripture that indicates its having been so distinguished in former times.

There had not for many years been an open vision of the DEITY; but as the LORD was about to call his people to Himself, and to deliver them out of Egypt, by the hand of Moses, He vouchsafed to appear, in order to appoint him His minister.

No wonder that so uncommon a sight as a bush burning with fire, without consuming, should strike Moses with astonishment. He was skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Yet could he not, from any principles of nature with which he was acquainted, account for so extraordinary a circumstance. This was among the things which Divine Revelation only could explain, for it was above the reach of human reason, and Moses might have spent his whole life in fruitless efforts, to explore the cause of this wonderful phenomenon; but no sooner did he discover a desire know to the meaning of
of



of it, than the LORD satisfied his wishes by assuring him that it was a token of his immediate presence.

We are told that the *Angel of the LORD* appeared, &c. I have before observed, that this expression is but another title of the Deity, synonymous to that of the *Image of God*, and the following verses in this section strongly confirm this idea; for had the glorious Being who addressed Moses, been a *created angel*, he would not have said *I am the GOD*, &c. nor would he have promised, in his own name to deliver Israel, or threaten to bring destruction on Egypt.

Strictly speaking, none but the SUPREME BEING Himself is *holy*; therefore, what are in Scripture called *holy things*, are only so as being sanctified by, or dedicated to him. In this sense the ground whereon Moses stood was holy; and it is supposed, that putting off the shoes was a mark of reverence that had been practised by the patriarchs.

Moses, finding himself in the immediate presence of GOD, was struck with the profoundest awe. To relieve his fears the LORD graciously proceeded to declare the purpose of His appearing. Humbled by a sense of his own imperfections, which this wonderful vision was calculated to inspire; and recollecting perhaps the ineffectual attempt he had formerly made to prevail on the Israelites to consider him as their leader, Moses wanted courage to undertake what the LORD required of him; on which GOD promised to give him supernatural assistance. This certainly should have satisfied Moses, but his faith, on this important occasion, wanted the strongest support. He foresaw all the obstacles that were in the way of his mission. He knew that idolatry prevailed in Egypt; and that he should appear as a stranger to the Israelites after so long an absence; — he therefore entreated to know by what name he should call the LORD, to distinguish him from heathen gods.

The title, which the DEITY assumed, could belong to none but the one supreme GOD,* “ the BEING OF BEINGS, who
giveth

* Bishop Beveridge's Sermons.

giveth being to, and exerciseth authority over all things in the universe. This title properly considered suggests the following ideas of GOD: viz. that He is *one Being*, existing in and of Himself; not receiving any thing from, nor depending upon, any other. That He is a *pure and simple Being*, without any mixture or composition; and therefore we must not conceive of Him as made up of several parts, faculties, or ingredients, but only of ONE, *who is that He is*, and whatsoever is in Him is HIMSELF; and though we read of several faculties or properties attributed to him in Scripture, as *wisdom, goodness, justice, &c.* we must not apprehend them to be several *powers, habits, or qualities*, as they are in us; for as they are in God, they are neither distinguished from one another, nor from his nature and essence in whom they are said to be; for, to speak properly, they are not *in* Him, but are his very essence or nature itself."

"I AM is commonly a verb of the first person, yet it is here used as a noun-substantive. When God speaks of HIMSELF He cannot be confined to *grammar rules*, being infinitely above and beyond the reach of all the languages in the world; and therefore it is no wonder that He expresses Himself in a way peculiar to Himself, and such as is suitable and proper to His own nature and glory." *

The glorious title, I AM, is suitable to the Deity as the universal God of the whole creation: but it was his will to be distinguished to the *Israelites* by an additional one — "*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*," in reference to the covenant made with those patriarchs concerning the *Promised*

* Those, who wish for farther assistance in contemplating on the Deity, may read with pleasure and advantage, "*An Attempt to prove the Existence and absolute Perfection of the supreme, unoriginated Being, in a demonstrative Manner, by Hugh Hamilton, Dean of Armagh.*" Published at Dublin, in 1784.

Seed; — by this name He is still known, and will ever continue to be remembered, as long as the world lasts.

It pleased God to direct Moses in what manner to open his mission; — not at first to all the people, but to the heads of families. This was certainly consistent with prudence and policy; for it was better that each of these should make the important matter known to their wives and children at home, than that the whole multitude should be called together, as such a measure would have occasioned tumult, and furnished Pharaoh with a plausible pretence for increasing their oppression.

If Moses had not been informed before-hand of the obstinacy of Pharaoh, he would most likely afterwards have been discouraged from persevering in his application to him for leave to let Israel depart; and had they not been informed that the LORD would permit them to spoil the Egyptians, as in times of war, they might have objected to leaving Egypt, on account of want of necessaries for the journey they were required to take.

The expostulation which God permitted Moses to make, shews, that he did not overpower the natural faculties of his mind; for the excuses he offered were such as *reason* would naturally suggest; and God, kindly considering him as a *reasonable creature*, was not offended at his scruples, but vouchsafed to give him a sensible demonstration of his miraculous power.

Moses, finding no immediate improvement of his natural faculties, still doubted his ability to execute what was required of him. Not that he had any impediment of speech, but to manage such a business as he was to be employed in, seemed to require an *extraordinary* degree of eloquence. This the LORD assured Moses by an unanswerable argument he could endow him with, and promised to do so.

The

The unwillingness of Moses to go after these promises was certainly a sin, and justly kindled the anger of the LORD against him; but he graciously spared him, and for his farther encouragement, promised him an auxiliary in his brother Aaron, who was by nature eloquent. Aaron however was to act in a subordinate capacity to Moses, and to receive the divine commands through him. The rod, which had been turned into a serpent, was to be the ensign of the honourable office to which Moses was appointed.

From this section much important instruction may be collected. In the first place it affords a striking proof of the *existence of God, and the certainty of a DIVINE IMAGE, in the nature of the DEITY*. It also shews, that the LORD is true to his promises; and that when his servants are dead, and their bodies mouldering in the dust, He is still *their* GOD; which, as our Saviour Himself observed, is a strong argument in favour of the doctrine of a future existence; "*for GOD is not the GOD of the dead, but of the living*;" — *all live unto him*.

We are likewise taught, that when we wish to study any thing that relates to the nature of the DEITY, we should do it with awe and reverence. It will be proper for us to keep in mind, that the great I AM is the very LORD GOD, in whom the DEITY visibly manifested Himself to the patriarchs.

We are farther instructed by this section how to use our reason in other matters of a religious nature. It appears from hence just and proper to examine the difficulties that lie in the way to our performance of any duty, and then to allow divine revelation to have its full weight; which, from the just arguments it affords in the written Word, is now a sufficient guide, and will even in the common occurrences of life calm our fears and satisfy our minds; for, when convinced that we act agreeably to the commands of our GREAT

CREATOR

CREATOR, we may confidently hope for the aid of Divine Grace to strengthen us in the performance of our duty. It is observable, that the LORD GOD, on this occasion, made a promise to Moses, similar to that which, as the MESSIAH, He afterwards made to the apostles. * This proves, that the *extraordinary influence* of the HOLY SPIRIT was at that time exerted, though not in so abundant a degree as after the promulgation of the Gospel.

* Matt. x. 19, 20. — Mark. xiii. 11. — Luke xii. 11, 12. — Luke xxi. 14, 15.

S E C T. LVIII.

MOSES AND AARON DELIVER GOD'S MESSAGE
TO THE ISRAELITES.

AND the LORD said unto Moses in Midian, Go, return into Egypt: for all the men are dead which fought thy life.

And Moses took his wife, and his sons, and set them upon an ass, and he returned to the land of Egypt. And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go.

And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my first-born.

That

And I say unto thee, Let my son go, that he may serve me : and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born.

And the LORD said to Aaron, Go into the wilderness to meet Moses. And he went and met him in the mount of God, and kissed him.

And Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD, who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel.

And Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people.

And the people believed : and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By taking his family with him Moses testified his faith in the LORD. The expression, *I will harden Pharaoh's heart*, will be explained in the sequel ; it is sufficient to remark here, that the LORD speaks of this as a purpose relating to a future time, not as a thing already done. Pharaoh had not yet committed that offence to which the punishment here threatened is annexed, but the LORD foreknew that he would commit it.

The rod of God was that which had been turned into a serpent, and which was the ensign of Moses' office, as the minister of the LORD.

The

The Almighty being now about to fulfil the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by forming their posterity into a nation, as his own peculiar people, styles them his *first-born*; — this title signifies, that they were the first *nation* which he took into immediate covenant with Himself.

How comfortable must it have been both to Moses and Aaron to compare together the revelations which had been separately made to them! It seems that they mutually encouraged each other, and hastened to execute the divine commission which they had received.

Moses soon had a proof of the foreknowledge of God, for he found the fears which he entertained, that the Israelites would not attend to him, groundless. They hearkened unto his voice as the LORD had said;* and the miracles performed in their sight served to testify the truth of his divine mission.

The behaviour of the Israelites on this occasion was perfectly just and proper, worthy of the imitation of all who are sensible of the goodness of God in time of affliction.

By this section, ministers are admonished not to be discouraged from the performance of their public duties by apparent difficulties, since the LORD may be expected to co-operate with their endeavours, if they proceed agreeably to His will. And all others are admonished to receive, with reverence and gratitude, those intimations of the divine favour, which it is the duty of ministers to make known to them; and which, as now contained in *Holy Writ*, are equally certain and valuable as if communicated to us by ministers divinely inspired.

* Exod. iii. 18.

S E C T. LIX.

MOSES AND AARON GO TO PHARAOH.

AND afterwards Moses and Aaron went in, and told Pharaoh, thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness.

And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

And they said, The GOD of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the LORD our GOD: lest he fall upon us with pestilence, or with the sword.

And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get ye unto your burdens.

And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens.

And Pharaoh commanded the same day the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying,

Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick as heretofore, let them go and gather straw for themselves.

And the tale of the bricks which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them: ye shall not diminish

minish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God.

Let there more work be laid upon the men, that they may labour therein: and let them not regard vain words.

And the task-masters of the people went out and their officers, and they spake to the people, saying, Thus saith Pharaoh, I will not give you straw.

Go ye, get you straw where you can find it: yet not ought of your work shall be diminished.

So the people were scattered abroad throughout all the land of Egypt, to gather stubble instead of straw.

And the task-masters hastened them, saying, Fulfil your works, your daily tasks, as when there was straw.

And the officers of the children of Israel, which Pharaoh's task-masters had set over them, were beaten, and demanded, Wherefore have ye not fulfilled your task in making brick, both yesterday and to-day, as heretofore?

Then the officers of the children of Israel came and cried unto Pharaoh, saying, wherefore dealest thou thus with thy servants?

There is no straw given unto thy servants, and they say to us, make brick: and behold, thy servants are beaten; but the fault is in thine own people.

But he said, Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice to the LORD.

Go therefore now and work : for there shall no straw be given you, yet shall ye deliver the tale of bricks.

And the officers of the children of Israel did see that they were in evil case after it was said, Ye shall not minish ought from your bricks of your daily task.

And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh.

And they said unto them, The LORD look upon you, and judge ; because ye have made our favour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us.

And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, LORD, wherefore hast thou so evil intreated this people ? Why is it that thou hast sent me ?

For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people ; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all.

Then the LORD said to Moses, Now shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh : for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of his land.

And God spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the LORD :

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob by the name of GOD ALMIGHTY ;
and

and by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them? *

And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan; the land of their pilgrimage, wherein they were strangers.

And I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage: and I have remembered my covenant.

Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you of their bondage: and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments.

And I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a GOD: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning the which I did swear, to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it you for an heritage; I am the LORD.

And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel: but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and for cruel bondage.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land.

* It is the opinion of several good Critics, that this verse should be read interrogatively; for it is certain, that God *was* known to the patriarchs by the name of JEHOVAH.

And Moses spake before the LORD, saying, Behold the children of Israel have not hearkened unto me; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of unpractised lips?

And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge unto the children of Israel, and unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt.

And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a God to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.

Thou shalt speak all that I command thee: and Aaron thy brother shall speak unto Pharaoh, that he send the children of Israel out of his land.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt.

But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments.

And the Egyptians shall know, that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

And Moses and Aaron did as the LORD commanded them, so did they.

And Moses was fourscore years old, and Aaron fourscore and three years old when they spake unto Pharaoh.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The attention which was paid to Moses and Aaron, by the Elders of Israel, strengthened their faith, and encouraged them to go to the King of Egypt.

Before we make any remarks on the character of Pharaoh, it will be proper to observe, that there are degrees of wickedness, and that *presumptuous sin*, which originates from wickedness of spirit, and consists * in reproaching the LORD, despising His word, and wilfully breaking His commandments is its last stage. Presumptuous sin is in Scripture called the *great offence* †. A presumptuous sinner is justly considered by GOD as an outcast from the race of mankind; for he is at enmity with GOD and man; and having broken the first law of nature, by refusing obedience to the CREATOR, he can have no claim to any privileges as a *creature*.

It is remarked by the Royal Psalmist, *that the LORD made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel*. The dispensations of His Providence, therefore, towards those his chosen people, demand our attentive consideration. We find, from different passages of Scripture, (which will be noticed in their turn) that the *way of the LORD* with *presumptuous sinners*, is, either to strike them dead by some signal judgment, or to withdraw His grace, and give them up to “*a reprobate mind, or a mind void of judgment,*” ‡ and make them unwilling instruments of shewing forth to the world the greatness of that power which they defy.

Pharaoh was a sinner of this description: he had resigned his heart to ambition and avarice, which led him first to injustice and cruelty, and then to a presumptuous defiance of the GREAT CREATOR of the universe.

* Num. xvi. 30, 31. † Ps. xix. 13. ‡ Rom. i. 28.

When Moses and Aaron entered into the presence of Pharaoh, and delivered, in a solemn manner, a message from the LORD GOD, he refused to listen to them, pretending that he knew of no such Being as the LORD GOD, and therefore disclaimed His authority. This was an act of presumptuous defiance; and it behoved the LORD to maintain His own honour.

Pharaoh's *not knowing the LORD*, was no excuse for him: his very ignorance was a sin, because his own reason would have taught him, that there must be a SUPREME BEING; and if he had not been totally devoid of piety, he would at least have paid attention to the persons, who professed to be the immediate ministers of the SUPREME BEING; and he would have feared to treat with rigor those whom the LORD styled *his people*; on the contrary, the haughty tyrant resolved to increase his cruelties to the Israelites on this very account; and commanded even the messengers of the LORD to submit to his yoke.

The task imposed on those among the Israelites, who were styled *officers*, was particularly hard; for they were required to enforce on their brethren the severities of the cruel monarch. The answer which Pharaoh made to these unhappy men, when they applied to him for redress, shews that he had no clemency in his nature.

The situation of the officers was truly distressing: they were enjoined to perform and exact impossibilities.—They had not yet experienced the wonderful goodness of the LORD:—they had no Scriptures to support their faith, by relations of what had been done for others under the like circumstances: we cannot then wonder that they should fall into despondency, when they found their case worse, instead of better, for the interference of Moses and Aaron. This trial was so great, as to stagger the faith even of Moses himself: he could not, by his own reason, discover, why the

LORD

LORD should do evil to the people He had promised to deliver; or why He should delay their relief, when every human means failed.—To revive his hope, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to inform Moses, what He designed to do, in order to accomplish the purpose He had before declared: and that Moses might not doubt His power to effect it, He reminded him of the excellency and perfection of His Divine nature, enumerating the several titles by which He had formerly been known to the Patriarchs.

The name JEHOVAH, can belong to none but God Himself: it imports, not only eternal existence, but omnipotent power, and unchangeable truth. By this title, the DIVINE IMAGE of GOD was distinguished from false deities in the family of Seth*; and by this He revealed Himself to Abraham† and Jacob. It is synonymous with LORD; and the original word is frequently translated so, in our version of the Old Testament.

That Moses might not be disheartened by the opposition of Pharaoh, GOD intimated to him, that the proud king would make great resistance; but that he should finally be subdued. As a farther encouragement, Moses was assured, that GOD remembered His covenant, and attended to the distresses of His chosen people.

What could be more comfortable to the Israelites, than the words which GOD dictated to Moses to speak unto them?—They contained every thing that their hearts could wish, yet they derived no consolation from them: harrassed with continual labour, and overwhelmed with grief for their accumulated misfortunes, they had no leisure to consider the authenticity of the message which Moses delivered to them. He had as yet done no act to engage their confidence; and the things which He promised to them, were such as had never been done for any nation. In considera-

* Gen. iv. 26.

† See Section XX.

tion of these circumstances, we may presume, God pardoned their *unbelief*; for we do not read that He expressed any displeasure at their murmurings.

As Moses had found on a former occasion, as well as in addressing the Israelites, the want of persuasive eloquence, it was natural for him to fear a second repulse from the king of Egypt.

It is observable, that in giving a charge to Moses and Aaron, the LORD assigned to each of them a distinct province: Moses was to be the immediate representative of JEHOVAH, invested with authority to demand the obedience of Pharaoh; and Aaron to be his prophet or subordinate minister. The LORD Himself engaged to perform signs and wonders.

From the expression, *I have made thee a God to Pharaoh*, we may understand that every petition which this obdurate king might have occasion to offer for respite, from time to time, should be made to Moses, as the LORD himself disdained to hearken to him. That Moses and Aaron might not suppose He required of them more than they were able to perform, the LORD acquainted them that they would have nothing to do but to speak and act as He should from time to time direct; — and that they might be prepared for great opposition, He also informed them, that “He should harden Pharaoh’s heart;” by which (I think) may be understood, not only that the LORD would abandon Pharaoh to his own wicked inclinations, but that He would moderate, for a time, that part of the punishment annexed to presumptuous sin, which is emphatically called the *terror of the LORD*; — a kind of instinctive dread of divine vengeance, the very reverse of that *consolation* which the righteous often feel, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, in the midst of the heaviest afflictions.

From

From the expression, *The Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD*, it is evident, that they believed in false gods; and the history of ancient times corroborates this opinion; for it is related, that they were notorious for a number of idolatries.

We may learn from this section, that God's delaying His mercy is no proof of his having forsaken his servants; that He compassionates their sufferings, and draws nearer to them the more they are oppressed, and that He bears with their infirmities. These considerations should incline us to place our trust and confidence in Him.

We also learn (as the Apostle expresses it) that such as do not like to retain God in their knowledge,* He gives over to a reprobate mind, or a mind void of understanding; that is to say, destitute of the aid of the Holy Spirit. This is the greatest evil, that can be inflicted in this life, for the assistance of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to help our discernment, in respect to the things which belong unto our peace, and to regulate our judgment in all spiritual matters. The person, who is deprived of this divine guide, however wise he may be in worldly matters, abuses his reason in religious concerns, and commits the greatest enormities. While we are *willing* to retain God in our knowledge, there is no fear that he will inflict it. Let our *will* therefore ever co-operate with his grace; and be it our earnest and daily prayer to God, that he may not take His HOLY SPIRIT from us!

* Rom. i. 28.

S E C T. LX.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

AND the LORD spake unto Moses, and unto Aaron, saying,

When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you; then thou shalt say unto Aaron, take thy rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent.

And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent.

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the forcerers; now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents, but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods.

And he hardened Pharaoh's heart, that he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuseth to let the people go.

Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning: lo, he goeth out unto the water: and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand.

And

And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD GOD of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go that they may serve me in the wilderness ; and behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear.

Thus saith the LORD, In this thou shalt know that I am the LORD : behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood.

And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink ; and the Egyptians shall lothe to drink of the water of the river.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood : and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood and in vessels of stone.

And Moses and Aaron did so, as the Lord commanded ; and he lift up the rod and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants : and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

And the fish that was in the river died, and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river : and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments : and Pharaoh's heart was hardened,

neither did he hearken unto them; as the LORD had said. And Pharaoh turned and went into his house, neither did he set his heart to this also.

And all the Egyptians digged round about the river for water to drink: for they could not drink of the water of the river.

And seven days were fulfilled, after that the LORD had smitten the river.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

And if thou refuse to let them go, behold, I will smite all thy borders with frogs.

And the river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into thine house, and into thy bed-chamber, and upon thy bed, and into the house of thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy ovens, and into thy kneading-troughs.

And the frogs shall come up both on thee, and upon thy people, and upon all thy servants.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.

And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt: and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

And the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt.

Then

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD.

And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only?

And he said, To-morrow. And he said, Be it according to thy word: that thou mayest know, that there is none like unto the LORD our God.

And the frogs shall depart from thee, and from thy houses, and from thy servants, and from thy people; they shall remain in the river only.

And Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh: and Moses cried unto the LORD, because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh.

And the LORD did according to the word of Moses: and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields.

And they gathered them together upon heaps; and the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them: as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

And they did so : for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man and in beast : all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

And the magicians did so with their enchantments, to bring forth lice, but they could not : so there were lice upon man, and upon beast.

Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh, This is the finger of God : and Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he hearkened not unto them ; as the LORD had said.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh : (lo, he cometh forth to the water :) and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me :

Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses ; and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon they are.

And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there ; to the end thou mayest know, that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

And I will put a division between my people, and thy people : to-morrow shall this sign be.

And the LORD did so : and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants

fervants houses, and into all the land of Egypt; the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

And Pharaoh called for Moses, and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your GOD in the land.

And Moses said, It is not meet so to do: for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our GOD: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and will they not stone us?

We will go three days journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the LORD our GOD, as he shall command us.

And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your GOD in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: intreat for me.

And Moses said, Behold, I go out from thee, and I will intreat the LORD, that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, to-morrow: but let not Pharaoh deal deceitfully any more, in not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD.

And Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

And the LORD did according to the word of Moses; and he removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people: there remained not one.

And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, neither would he let the people go.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was observed in the last section, that those who openly oppose the LORD, subject themselves to the dreadful punishment of being "given up to a mind void of judgment." In this condition was Pharaoh; — he disdained to obey the voice of the LORD GOD; on which account divine grace was withheld from him, and he had no guide for his actions but human reason, blinded by pride and prejudice; in consequence of which those very circumstances, which had a direct tendency to excite in a religious mind sentiments of reverence and devotion, hardened his heart, and strengthened the wicked resolution he had formed.

As the LORD foresaw that Pharaoh would require a miracle to be wrought, in confirmation of the mission of Moses and Aaron, he directed them how to proceed in this case.

By sending for the magicians, Pharaoh expressly defied the LORD. We are told, by St. Paul, that these persons were named Jannes and Jambres; that they were men of corrupt minds, and resisted the truth*.

It is infinitely beyond the reach of human art to turn rods into serpents, and we cannot suppose that the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the universe would permit any inferior Being whatever to *alter* the works of his hands; therefore we must ascribe the miracle to *divine power*, not to the enchantments used by the magicians.* By causing their rods, as well as

* It has been inferred from several texts in Scripture, that signs and wonders could be wrought by the Devil and his agents. These must have been mere delusions, and indeed they are called "lying wonders." *Real miracles* could only be wrought by the power of God. How far God suffered devils to deceive their worshippers for their punishment is unknown to us. See Deut. xiii. 1. — Matt. xxiv. 24. — 2 Thess. ii. 9.

* 2 Tim. iii. 8.

that

that of Aaron's, to be transformed, in order to be swallowed up by his, the LORD strongly intimated His own supremacy over their idols. But Pharaoh could not discern the power of the LORD, for his foolish heart was full of hatred of God, pride, unmercifulness, maliciousness, and other malignant passions, with which the HOLY SPIRIT will not dwell; therefore GOD with-held his grace, and Pharaoh's heart was of course hardened.

The miracle which is next recorded was equally astonishing; for what can be more different than the liquid substance that flows through the veins and arteries of living animals, and the element of water? This change was certainly beyond the magicians art to effect, or even of the demons, whose aid they may be supposed to have invoked. It is scarcely to be thought that Pharaoh should employ the magicians to *encrease* the public calamity; it is more likely that they implored their gods to enable them to *counteract* the dreadful evil that was coming upon their land; and that the very *reverse of their wishes* followed their incantations; which served in a wonderful manner to promote the glory of the LORD.

The changing of the water into blood, and killing the fish, was a very heavy judgment upon the Egyptians; as they abstained from eating most kinds of animals, drank scarcely any thing but water, and fed greatly upon fish. But though the power of the CREATOR was so evidently displayed in this miracle, Pharaoh still refused to obey the voice of the LORD.

The same that has been said respecting the changing of the water may be applied to the plague of frogs. It is manifest, that neither the magicians or their idols possessed miraculous power, or it would have been displayed in *driving the frogs away*; but instead of their being useful in this respect, Pharaoh was under the necessity of intreating Moses and Aaron to supplicate the LORD, in order to obtain deliverance; yet
he

he shewed no signs of repentance. He gave way to the power of the LORD, only because he was at that instant sensible of his own comparative weakness; but he felt no remorse or sorrow for his wickedness and presumption.

What a triumph had Moses and Aaron. The haughty tyrant, who a few days before had commanded them to work as his slaves, now becomes a suppliant to them for mercy!

By hearkening to the prayer of Moses, in behalf of Pharaoh, the Lord put great honour upon his minister. Well might Moses say, *ironically*, to Pharaoh, "*Glory over me.*"

The LORD was pleased to suffer Pharaoh to name the exact time at which the plague should be removed; and it is observable, that the king did not entreat that it might immediately cease, but mentioned the morrow; from which may be inferred, that he was unwilling to owe any thing to the LORD, supposing that the frogs would go of themselves by that time. The event agreeing with Pharaoh's own appointment, proved that all was the work of GOD. If Pharaoh had not had "*a mind void of judgment,*" surely these wonders would have convinced him, that *there is none like unto the LORD GOD.*

By the dust, we may understand those light particles of earth, which being raised imperceptibly by the air, are only to be seen in the sun-beams; and which, as they fall, lodge on every substance that is in the way to receive them; even these, changed into vermin, must have been very tormenting;—and how wonderful was the transformation! Who but the great CREATOR could effect it?

It is to be observed, that when Aaron smote the earth, *all* the dust of the land of *Egypt* became lice. The efforts of the magicians must therefore have been directed against the land of Goshen, in which the Israelites dwelt. Here they were compelled to acknowledge publicly a divine power; but even the

the testimony of the Egyptian priests* was not sufficient to soften the proud heart of Pharaoh, who gave a convincing proof of the LORD's prescience, by opposing all conviction, as He had foretold. Though it is not mentioned before, we may reasonably conclude that a distinction was from the *first*, made between the Israelites and the Egyptians. The former did not deny the LORD to be GOD. He had chosen them as his peculiar people; — and such calamities as were sent upon the Egyptians, added to their other afflictions, would have driven them to downright despair; besides, the Egyptians would not have discerned the finger of GOD, had his own people been fellow-sufferers with them.

It is likely that Pharaoh and his subjects would have regarded it as the effect of chance; and that even the Israelites themselves might have overlooked the mercy, had not the LORD expressly called upon them to observe the difference he made between them.

The plague of flies was a very distressing one, as may be easily conceived, if we consider that there are a number of species of insects that go under this denomination; most of which have powers of tormenting, either by venomous stings, which give intolerable pain; or disagreeable buzzings, that are extremely disturbing. The Psalmist observes, that the Egyptians were "*devoured with flies*;" and they certainly must have suffered great anguish from them, or the haughty Pharaoh would not have relented.

On this occasion, he stipulated, that the Israelites should not go out of his land; which shews that he retained the same principle of oppression, which had hitherto actuated him to treat them with rigour.

The Egyptians idolised those animals which the patriarch offered in sacrifice. It may be inferred, from this passage of
Sacred

* The magicians are supposed to have been idolatrous priests.

Sacred History, that sacrifices had been omitted by the Israelites during the Egyptian bondage, — the rite however was not forgotten.

As the miracles, recorded in this section, were wrought to prove, that the Divine Being, whom we call GOD, is the SUPREME LORD, we should regard them as evidences of this important truth.

By changing inanimate sticks into living reptiles, GOD demonstrated, that no creature is of any particular order or species, by necessity, or merely by a regular course of nature, but according to his will. How thankful therefore should those be who are placed in such a rank in the creation as enables them to contemplate his wondrous works, and to hold communion with Him on earth; and who enjoy a well founded hope that they shall after death be happy in his presence for ever in heaven!

Water is bestowed by the bountiful Creator in such abundance, that few experience the want of it to a distressing degree; but let us imagine to ourselves what would be our unhappy condition, should this element, so necessary to our comfort and refreshment, be suddenly changed into blood, or taken from us! We learn, from the section before us, that the CREATOR has power to alter it as he sees fit, and he can as easily take it away; let us therefore be very careful not to provoke him, to deprive us of so invaluable a blessing, or turn it into a curse; — and let us reflect on the numberless benefits we derive from it, and be thankful for his goodness in bestowing it. Though frogs are in general harmless creatures, and it is a great mark of weakness to be terrified at them, they are certainly very disagreeable in houses. Our merciful CREATOR, who, in all parts of this world, has shewn a tender regard for the welfare of mankind, has so disposed this, and many other species of noxious creatures, that they give no annoyance to us; but, on the contrary, prove
beneficial,

beneficial, by feeding on what would render stagnated waters prejudicial to our health. Yet how apt are we to overlook these marks of his kindness! The miracle we are now considering, is calculated to awaken, in our hearts, proper sentiments; therefore, while we rejoice, that we have not frogs in our chambers, in our beds, in our kneading troughs, and our ovens; let us remember that it is God who preserves us from so distressing an evil.

We have equal reason to be grateful for God's goodness, in respect to noisome insects, which seldom abound, except where cleanliness is wanting; nor should we be unthankful to his providence, for keeping us from being *devoured by flies*. There is not a creature in nature, however small and insignificant many of them may appear, but is capable, by an immoderate increase, of being a plague to mankind.

It is impossible to reflect on the power of the CREATOR, and the love which He displays towards the human race, even in matters which, to the inattentive, appear of little importance, without feeling a thorough conviction, that He must undoubtedly be the greatest and best of beings. Let us, therefore, be ever ready to acknowledge Him as the LORD of the whole creation; and, as such, pay Him our willing homage.

S E C T. LXI.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

THEN the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

For if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still:

Behold,

Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.

And the LORD shall sever between the cattle of Israel, and the cattle of Egypt; and there shall nothing die of all that is the children's of Israel.

And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, Tomorrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land. And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died; but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

And Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead. And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

And the LORD said unto Moses, and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh:

And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains, upon man, upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven: and it became a boil breaking forth with blains, upon man, and upon beast.

And the magicians could not stand before Moses, because of the boil: for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

And

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them : as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people : that thou mayest know, that there is none like me in all the earth.

For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence ; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.

And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power : and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth. As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

Behold, to-morrow about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt, since the foundation thereof even until now.

Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field : for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee

flee into the houses. And he that regarded not the word of the LORD, left his servants and his cattle in the field.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt, since it became a nation.

And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast: and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.

Intreat the LORD, (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.

And Moses said unto him, as soon as I am gone out of the city, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD: and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there

there be any more hail ; that thou mayest know, how that the earth is the LORD's.

But as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD GOD. And the flax and the barley was smitten : for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled. But the wheat and the rye were not smitten : for they were not grown up.

And Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh, and spread abroad his hands unto the LORD : and the thunders and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth.

And when Pharaoh saw that the rain, and the hail, and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go ; as the LORD had spoken by Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the Egyptians did not feed upon the flesh of oxen, calves, &c. cattle were of great value to them ; some for carrying burdens, others on account of their milk ; it must therefore have been a heavy punishment to them to lose these creatures.

The text says, *all the cattle of Egypt died* ; that is to say, all which had the *murrain*. By cutting them off in this manner, the LORD evidently proved, that “ *all the beasts of the field are his.*” *

It appears very hard, that the poor animals should suffer for the sins of men ; but as GOD's tender mercies are over all

His

* Psalm l. 10.

His works, and the cattle could not have committed any offence against Him, we may be certain that He so ordered the judgment as to inflict less pain on those which died, than they would have endured had their lives been prolonged.

The plague of boils must have been a very afflictive one, for they were of the most painful and rancorous * kind; and it is remarkable, that the magicians seem to have been tormented by them to the greatest degree; and that in consequence of them they yielded the contest, which they had hitherto carried on with Moses and Aaron: by this circumstance the supremacy of the LORD GOD of the Hebrews over the idols of Egypt was made manifest.

The storm, which the LORD sent upon the Egyptians, was the more dreadful to them, because in Egypt it is a very uncommon thing to see *rain*, much less, *hail*. The Psalmist has given a very poetic description of this judgment: "*He destroyed the vines with hail, and the sycamore trees with frost: He gave up the cattle also to the hail, and the flocks to hot thunder bolts.*"† And from the account which this section gives of it, we find that GOD employed three elements against Pharaoh, — the *air* in the thunder, the *water* in the hail, and the *fire* in the lightning; all jointly demonstrating that the GOD of *Israel* is the GOD of *nature*.

We find, from this section, as well as the foregoing one, that, so far from *impelling* or *inclining* Pharaoh to do evil, GOD did every thing consistent with divine justice to reclaim him. He never sent a judgment upon Egypt without first warning Pharaoh of it, and informing him for what end it was designed; and if He with-held his *restraining grace*, it was only as a friend with-holds his advice from one who refuses to be influenced by it; and who, in order to prevent mischief from falling upon the innocent, redoubles his kind-

ness

* See Deut. xxviii. 27.

† Ps. lxxviii. 47, 48.

ness to those whom the other strives to injure. Had Pharaoh drawn nigh to GOD, GOD would have drawn nigh to him.*

The plague of boils was of such a nature, that had not the LORD, who sent it, healed those who were afflicted, it would have proved fatal; but it was his will *to raise up Pharaoh from the bed of sickness*, and prolong his life, in order to make him a farther instrument of displaying His divine power.

There was a remarkable discrimination made among the people of Egypt, in respect to the calamities occasioned by the storm of hail, which affected the property of those only who did not regard the word of the LORD. This strongly intimated that GOD was *disposed* to shew mercy to them.

Though (as has been observed before) the LORD *moderated* in Pharaoh and his people that *terror* with which He generally torments the minds of presumptuous sinners, so as to enable them to endure reiterated judgments, the king was not totally exempt from it. The mighty thunderings awakened, in his mind, a sense of guilt, and extorted a confession from him, that *the LORD was righteous, and he and his people wicked*; but his fear was very different from that which is described to be the beginning of wisdom.† It was no more than a temporary dread of divine vengeance, impelling him, instinctively, to seek relief from Him, who alone could give it. It did not produce humility and godly sorrow. The mercy of GOD, which should have led him to repentance, served but to harden his heart, and make him more obdurate; which is the usual effect of divine mercy upon those, who, by provoking GOD to withdraw the aid of his HOLY SPIRIT, subject themselves to the influence of that malignant Being, whose delight it is to make mankind ungrateful to their Almighty Benefactor.

This section teaches us, that the LORD can *wound* and can *heal*.‡ That an extraordinary mortality among cattle is designed

* James iv. 8. — † Prov. i. 7. — ‡ Deut. xxxii. 39.

signed by him as a punishment to men ; — that the elements of air, fire and water, are under His direction ; — that the thunder roars, and the lightning flies, at his command ; — that the most violent storm ceases at his bidding ; — and that he employs all these means for the chastisement and reformation of wicked princes and nations. It also informs us, that it is sometimes the way of the LORD to avert these evils from individuals, when he sends judgments on a king and people in general. Let us therefore acknowledge Him as the God of *the whole earth* ; and ever keep in mind, that His mercy is over them that fear Him.

S E C T. LXII.

THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh : for I have hardened his heart, and the hearts of his servants ; that I might shew these my signs before him :

And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done amongst them : that ye may know, how that I am the LORD.

And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD GOD of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me ? Let my people go, that they may serve me.

Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to-morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coasts.

And they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth : and they shall eat the residue

residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field.

And they shall fill thy houses, and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians; which neither thy fathers nor thy fathers fathers have seen since the day that they were upon the earth unto this day. And he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh's servants said unto him, How long shall this man be a snare unto us? let the men go that they may serve the LORD their GOD: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed?

And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your GOD: but who are they that shall go?

And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.

And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you, as I will let you go and your little ones: look to it: for evil is before you.

Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the LORD; for that you did desire. And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come up upon the land of Egypt, and eat every herb of the land, even all that the hail hath left.

Q

And

And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east-wind upon the land all that day and all that night: and when it was morning, the east-wind brought the locusts.

And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field through all the land of Egypt.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron in haste; and he said, I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you.

Now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and intreat the LORD your God, that he may take away from me this death only. And he went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD.

And the LORD turned a mighty strong west-wind, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea: there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt; even darkness which may be felt.

And

And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven : and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.

They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days : but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD : only let your flocks and your herds be stayed, let your little ones also go with you.

And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices, and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God ;

Our cattle also shall go with us ; there shall not an hoof be left behind ; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God ; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD until we come thither.

But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the beginning of this section, we find the LORD again repeating to Moses, that *he had hardened the heart of Pharaoh and all his servants* : it is evident that this expression (as we observed before) must not be taken in the sense which the words at the first view seem to convey : the true meaning in this place appears to be, that God had given them up to obduracy, and instead of cutting them off, would continue to endue them with *bodily strength* to sustain the various plagues and torments, which, for the sake of maintaining His own honour in the world, He should bring upon them.

If we call to mind the variety of afflictions which were, in a short space of time, successively sent upon the Egyptians, and that in particular they had lately been afflicted with a putrid disorder, which must have weakened them greatly; we may easily conceive, that unless the *principle of animal life* (which seems to be here meant by the *heart*) had been *hardened*, nature must have sunk beneath such a pressure of calamity. Under these circumstances the Egyptians were very unfit to encounter the horrors of a tremendous storm, which was calculated to occasion the most violent agitation of spirits.

It is observable, that all the threatenings sent from God to Pharaoh, were *conditional*. *Let my people go, &c.—else, if thou refuse—I will bring, &c.*—from whence we may infer, that Pharaoh's *will was free*, and that he had no *injustice* to complain of, but would have found pardon if he had repented. It should likewise be remarked, that he had time allowed him for reflection, between one judgment and another, and generally a day and night; but, the longer the respite that was granted him, the more obdurate he became. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed inclined to comply, *in part*, with what was required of him, but he never did this from a principle of obedience to God, but was resolutely bent to maintain his own right to the services of those whom the LORD claimed as His own peculiar people, which was exalting himself against God.

Locusts are a species of very devouring insects. Travelers * inform us, that they fly in the air all compact together, like a vast cloud, sometimes fifteen or eighteen miles long, and about ten or twelve miles broad, so that they quite darken the sky, and make the brightest day obscure; and that wherever they alight, they devour all the corn in an hour's

* See Stackhouse on the Bible, in the Notes.

time, and frequently make a famine in the country. These insects do not live above six months, and when they are dead, the stench of them so corrupts and infects the air, that it very often breeds pestilences. The Prophet Joel calls the *locust, the caterpillar, and the palmer worm*, God's great army, which he sends among a wicked and rebellious people *. An ordinary locust is described by an antient naturalist, as so fierce, that it can kill a serpent, by taking it fast by the jaws, and biting it to death. How formidable then must those of Egypt have appeared, which were such as had never been seen before! not that they were created on purpose to be a plague to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, (for it appears that they came with a strong east wind from a distant country, most likely a place which had never been inhabited by mankind) but they certainly were directed by a divine impulse to visit these coasts.

There is something in the thoughts of famine, so very shocking, that no person, who reflects properly, would willingly expose himself to its horrors.—Pharaoh could not avoid seeing that this dreadful evil was coming fast upon him, and his people. The locusts, devoured with astonishing rapacity, the vegetables, which made a principal part of the food of him and his people. Every hour's delay encreased the danger; therefore, impelled by fear of the *power* of the LORD, he entreated Moses and Aaron to implore forgiveness for him, but it soon appeared that he had no true penitence. The LORD's mercy, like the kindness of a tender father to a profligate son, served only to harden him still more to resist his will and commands.

The plague which followed was more dreadful than any which had yet been sent, not only on account of its duration, but there is a solemnity in darkness, which naturally fills the

* Joel ii. 25.

mind with awe. That which fell upon Egypt, was, as the author of the Book of Wisdom informs us, attended with unusual horrors *: and when we consider that those inward comforts which religion inspires (the only succours of reason) were withdrawn, we may easily suppose, that fear magnified every real danger, and created many imaginary ones. The *terror of the LORD* was now sent forth upon those who defied Him, producing all the horror of an evil conscience.—“Over them was spread an heavy night, an image of that darkness which should afterwards receive them; but yet, were they unto themselves, more grievous than the darkness.”

The Israelites might have taken the opportunity of departing during the Egyptian darkness, but the LORD would not permit them to steal away, as He intended to deliver them from bondage, in a triumphant manner.

After what has been said concerning the other plagues of Egypt, it is the less necessary to point out the instruction which the present section is designed to convey. The wonders it relates, furnished additional proofs of the omnipotence of the LORD, of his great forbearance towards sinners, and of his goodness to those who fear and worship him.

It may, however, be proper to observe, that the race of insects which proved so destructive to the Egyptians, is not extinct; as formidable an army of them as ravaged that country, would soon collect and annoy our own, should the CREATOR exert his instinctive power for that purpose, and he has myriads besides of different species, all capable of doing great mischief to the produce of the fields and gardens; (even those minute ones which occasion blights and mildew, are considered as important evils.) Let us therefore humbly beseech God to forbid their approach; and let us never for-

* Book of Wisdom, chap. 17. This chap. may be read here as a commentary on this part of Sacred History.

get to be thankful to Him for preserving to us, the fruits of the earth.

It is GOD alone that dispenseth light and darkness, and though He has established the courses of the heavenly bodies, so that the sun and moon mark a regular succession of days and nights, months and years, He undoubtedly can, even without subverting the plan which His wisdom has formed, make darkness like noon day, and noon like the shadow of death, in any part of the world. We ought, therefore, to be thankful to his providence for the light of the sun and moon, and endeavour to live so conformably to His holy will, that we may never provoke him to send upon *us*, such dreadful visitations as struck dismay and terror into the minds of the most hardened of sinners.

S E C T. LXIII.

THE LORD'S LAST MESSAGE TO PHARAOH.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover, the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt.

And all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant, that is behind the mill ; and all the first-born of beasts.

And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast ; that ye may know, how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee ; and after that I will go out.

And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face, no more : for in that day thou seest my face, thou shalt die.

And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more. And he went out from Pharaoh in great anger.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you ; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh : and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By the former plagues the LORD had demonstrated that all nature was at His command ; that the lives of animals depended on His will, and that he could send health or disease on mankind as it seemed good in His sight. He next resolved to prove, that he had equal power over the lives of of mankind, by inflicting that punishment which he had before threatened.*

It seems to be intimated in this section, that some of the Egyptians were so affected by the judgments they had endured, that they feared to deny any thing which Moses or the Israelites should require of them ; at least they wished to be rid of a people, whose detention had been the cause of so much distress to their country. Pharaoh, however, continued obstinately resolved not to obey the LORD ; and, instead of humbling himself, received, with the most furious rage, the awful message which Moses delivered to him.

The apostle, St. Paul, observes, that it is one effect of impiety to deaden the tender affections of the soul ; † and the passage before us affords a striking proof of this assertion. Pharaoh had sufficient reason to believe that the LORD was able to do what he threatened ; and, if his heart had been susceptible of the usual emotions of parental love, he would readily have made a sacrifice of his *pride* to save the life of his child — the same may be said of his subjects.

The expression, *the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart*, is frequently repeated ; perhaps to keep in mind, that unless he had been *strengthened*, as has been before observed, he could not have maintained such a long contest with Omnipotence. It is certain, that Moses did not suppose that God had doomed Pharaoh to commit evil, and suffer for it, for he frequently

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* See Section 58. — † Rom. i. 31. " Without natural affection."

quently admonished him to obey the command of the LORD; and repeatedly intreated the LORD to deliver him from the plagues; this would have been a mockery of God, nay, an act of presumption in Moses, if he had been convinced, that God Himself prevented Pharaoh's compliance, on purpose to bring him to destruction.

We learn, from this section, that the death of children is sometimes meant as a divine chastisement to parents. In respect to the Egyptians, it was most likely designed as a punishment for bringing up theirs to defy the LORD GOD of the Hebrews. If, therefore, we have any desire to preserve the lives of our children, let us be careful not to offend the LORD by any flagrant act of impiety ourselves; or encourage, in our offspring, the practice of any vice that may provoke Him to cut them off in the morning of their days.

S E C T. LXII.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER.

AND the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it, according to the number of the souls; every man, according to his eating, shall make your count for the lamb.

Your

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year : ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats.

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month ; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts, and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it.

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire ; and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire ; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning : and that which remaineth of it until the morning, ye shall burn with fire.

And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand : and ye shall eat it in haste ; it is the LORD's passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast : and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment ; I am the LORD.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side-posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians: and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side-posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee, and to thy sons for ever.

And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

And the children of Israel went away, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

ANN O -

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Though the Israelites were not *presumptuous* or *prophane*, like the Egyptians, they were yet *sinners*, and having, as such, incurred the penalty of death *, they had no claim to divine favour, neither could they redeem themselves. But God graciously determined of his own bountiful mercy, before the foundation of the world, to pardon all those who would repent of their sins, believe, fear, and trust in Him, and obey his Divine commands, and ordained that the *promised seed of the woman* should satisfy his justice, and make atonement for the sins of the whole race of mankind, by submitting to a voluntary death for their redemption.

The time for this sacrifice was yet at a very great distance, when Israel was about to be delivered from Egyptian bondage; but as that deliverance was designed to be a type of the greater deliverance from the *bondage of sin*; and also a pledge to assure his faithful servants of the certainty of it; the LORD instituted the *passover*, as a representation of the great sacrifice to be made in the fulness of time.

It was a very significant regulation, that in respect to ecclesiastical affairs, every succeeding year should commence with the solemnization of a rite which intimated a redemption from death, through the mercy of God.

The passover was instituted about the beginning of our March, which prefigured, that the Redeemer of the world should suffer in that month: before the institution of the passover, the Israelites began to date the new year from the middle of September, and still continue to do so in civil concerns.

It was required that every household should kill a lamb for itself, that each individual might have an opportunity of expressing their faith in God's promises, by joining in that
divine

* Rom. vi. 23.

divine ordinance, which was a token of his intended mercy to them.

A Lamb without blemish was a fit emblem of a Saviour who would live a life of perfect innocence and holiness. The LORD's commanding the Lamb to be slain, indicated, that He having appointed death to be the punishment of sin, it was necessary for the satisfaction of divine justice, that this penalty *should* be paid; that it could not be paid by the sinners themselves, but that it actually would be paid by the *Redeemer*, of whom the Lamb was a type or representation; and the sprinkling of the blood served at once to testify the faith of the Israelites, and to intimate the efficacy of the blood of the REDEEMER.

The pascal lamb was slain before Israel was delivered out of Egypt, to signify, that the Saviour must suffer before mankind could be delivered from the bondage of sin. It was killed before the law of Moses, or the sacrifices of Aaron were enjoined, to shew, that deliverance comes to the human race only through the REDEEMER.

The manner in which the Israelites were required to eat the passover, was calculated to bring to their remembrance, in future, the situation they were in when they eat it the first time.

The lamb was roasted with fire, to denote (as is supposed) the dreadful pains which the REDEEMER would suffer. Unleavened bread was an emblem of sincerity and truth*, as bitter herbs were of repentance and mortification.

This ceremony was to be observed *for ever*, that is to say, as long as the Mosaic dispensation should last, we shall find by the New Testament, that it was no longer obligatory, after Christ was slain.

It is needless to enlarge farther on the subject of the Jewish passover, as the rite is abolished; CHRIST, the true *pascal lamb*, has been slain for the redemption of the world, through whom

* 1 Cor. v. 8.

whom alone Christians are to look for salvation; but it may be useful to us to reflect on the wonderful goodness and mercy of God, in appointing a mean whereby atonement might be made for sin, and an interest in the blood of the REDEEMER secured, long before He came to lay down his life as a ransom for mankind.

It is observable, that the Israelites were commanded to instruct their children in the *meaning* of this rite, from whence may be inferred, that it is the duty of christian parents, to explain to their children, the meaning of that institution, which is now substituted in the place of the passover. Yet, how many are suffered to grow up in total ignorance of that Holy Sacrament, which was ordained to keep up a constant remembrance of what has been done for them!

S E C T. LXIV.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE ISRAELITES.

AND it came to pass that at mid-night the LORD smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the first-born of cattle.

For while all things were in quiet silence, and night in the midst of her swift course,

The ALMIGHTY WORD leaped from Heaven, out of his royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land devoted to destruction, and brought the infallible commandment as a sharp sword, and
standing

standing up, filled all things with death, and he touched the heavens, but stood upon the earth.

Then suddenly visions of horrible dreams troubled them fore, and terrors came upon them unlooked for.

And one thrown here, and another there half-dead, shewed the cause of his death.

For the dreams that troubled them did foreshew this, lest they should perish, and not know why they were afflicted.

And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

The master and the servant were punished after one manner, and like as the king, so suffered the common person.

So they altogether had innumerable dead with one kind of death, neither were the living sufficient to bury them: for in one moment the noblest offspring of them was destroyed.

And Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron by night, and said, Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel: and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said.

Also take your flocks, and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone, and bless me also.

And

And the Egyptians were urgent upon the people that they might send them out of the land in haste : for they said, We be all dead men.

And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders.

And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses ; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment.

And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required : and they spoiled the Egyptians.

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, besides children.

And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened : because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.

Now the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years.

And it came to pass, at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the self same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.

It

It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD, to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Sanctify unto me all the first-born among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast; it is mine.

And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.

This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.

Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD.

Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days: and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.

And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me, when I came forth out of Egypt.

And

And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes ; that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth ; for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.

Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year.

And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this ? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.

And it came to pass when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beasts ; therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all the first-born, being males, but all the first-born of my children I redeem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We may suppose that Moses delivered the LORD's message to Pharaoh on the same day that he directed the Israelites to separate the lambs for the passover, which was several days before the last plague was sent upon Egypt, so that the Egyptians had sufficient time to reflect upon the danger to which they exposed themselves, by detaining God's people ; but while the Israelites with faith and devout expectation, prepared for their departure, Pharaoh and his presumptuous subjects went on encouraging each other, in an obstinate defiance of the threatnings of that great Being, who had already fully demonstrated to them, that He is possessed of *omnipotence*.

There

There was something so foolish in this conduct, that there is no accounting for it any other way, than by imputing it to a want of that divine principle (which as has been before observed) is necessary to regulate *human reason*, and prevent the passions from obtaining an ascendancy over it.—It is evident that Pharaoh did not, on this occasion, make a proper use of his reasoning faculty, or he must have discerned the folly of opposing the will of the LORD GOD.

Of all the judgments that had yet been inflicted upon the Egyptians, none was equal in its effects and duration to *the death of their first-born*. This was calculated to recall that tenderness which impiety, by raising turbulent passions in the mind, had, in a manner, obliterated; and at the same time to mortify the pride of those who exalted themselves against GOD, as it deprived them of the principal hope of their family, the *first-born son*; he who was to succeed his father in honour and estate, and support that pride which aspired to domineer even over the people, whom GOD had honoured with the title of His own *first-born*. The other plagues were but temporary evils in comparison with this. The river now no longer flowed with blood, but yielded again the refreshing element of water. The houses of the Egyptians were cleansed from noisom reptiles, their bodies from vermin, the flies which devoured them were dead, and the land was purified from the corruption which they had occasioned. The loss of cattle which they had sustained by the murrain, might be repaired by purchase, and subsequent encrease. — Health was restored to their bodies; the tempest was past, and the air again serene; future crops of flax and barley, might supply the deficiencies which the hail and fire had made; and the quick growth of vegetables promised a restoration of the herbs of the field; the army of locusts was no more; and trees would again shoot forth their leaves, and bear fruit.

The darkness was such as had never yet been known, and might possibly never be known again. But who could restore to life their *first-born*? What could recompence them for the loss of their children? The afflicted parents could not console themselves with the thought, that their beloved offspring were removed to a world of bliss, where they might hope to meet them again in glory, crowned with immortality; on the contrary, their sorrow was aggravated by the "TERROR OF THE LORD;" which seized their minds; and filled them with fearful apprehension that the vengeance of an offended God would soon fall on their own heads.

It was one part of God's denunciation against the Egyptians,* that he would execute judgment against all the *gods of Egypt*.

As the Egyptians originally descended from Misraim, the grandson of Noah, they must originally have had the knowledge of the LORD among them, nor had they totally lost it in the days of Abraham and Isaac; but by degrees they fell into the grossest idolatry; and, besides a number of idols, which they called celestial and terrestrial gods, they gave adoration to brute animals; and that to so great a variety, that in almost every town or village they worshipped a different one; which was often the cause of bitter quarrels, and sometimes of dangerous wars. They paid divine honours to the lion, the bull, the goat, the cat, the dog, the ibis, the wolf, the crocodile, and many others. If any one killed any of the sacred animals designedly, he was punished with immediate death; — they were fed at great expence while living; and, when they died, the Egyptians went into deep mourning, and lamented them as if they had been their dearest children. These, in all probability, were the beasts that died in the last plague, (the gods of Egypt,) and not the cattle of the field. In this account of the idolatries of the Egyptians, we see, that as the Apostle expresses, "Though they

* See Section 62.

they knew GOD, they glorified him not as GOD, but changed the glory of the uncorruptible GOD (even his own express IMAGE) for four-footed beasts and creeping things; — the *truth* of GOD into a lie; — honouring the *creature* more than the CREATOR, who is blessed for evermore!*

The prediction, which Moses delivered to Pharaoh, was now fulfilled †. His own proud heart was humbled, and his people were urgent to send the Israelites out of their land; they at length acknowledged them to be the people of GOD ‡, and willingly furnished them with such things as might be necessary to add splendour to the sacrifice they were going to make in the wilderness.

At first sight it appears a dishonourable act in the Israelites to borrow of the Egyptians what they could have no intention to return; but we must consider, that the Israelites had been treated in a very unjust and cruel manner by the Egyptians, who had defrauded them, by obliging them to labour without receiving any wages for their work; that a number of their children had also been put to death, and in all probability many persons had lost their lives in consequence of the severities which had been exercised on them; so that the Israelites had an undoubted right to spoil the Egyptians, if opportunity offered, as much as any nation has to take the possessions of those with whom they are in a state of war, especially as they did it by the express command of GOD; for all things in this world are properly his, he created, governs, and sustains the universe, therefore may justly take from one, and give to another, as his infinite wisdom sees proper. Egypt and her proud king had forfeited all pretension to GOD's bounty, by an open defiance of his power; we therefore cannot wonder that he should deprive them of the riches they were so utterly unworthy of.

With what joy must the Israelites have seized the long-wished for opportunity of escaping from such barbarous oppressors!

Rameses

* Rom. i.

† Wisdom, xviii. 13.

‡ See Sect. 64.

Rameſes was the chief city in Goſhen ; Succoth was about twelve miles from it ; — here the Iſraelites ſtopped to review their company.

The mixed multitude are ſuppoſed to have been ſtrangers of different nations, who lived in Egypt ; and, having ſeen the wonders, which were wrought for the deliverance of the Iſraelites, reſolved to accompany them, with a view to the improvement of their own fortune.

To *ſanctify*, ſignifies to ſet apart for holy purpoſes ; it was very proper, that the Iſraelites ſhould have a religious rite, to call to their remembrance the great mercy of God, in ſparing their firſt-born, when thoſe of Egypt were deſtroyed ; and that they ſhould inform their ſons of this memorable deliverance, and endeavour to excite in their minds love and reverence towards the great Author of it. In reſpect to keeping the paſſover, the Jews have been ſo far obedient to God's command, as never to aboliſh it ; nay, thoſe, who have lived ſince the promulgation of Chriſtianity, have been particularly tenacious of it ; and, not perceiving that the *paſchal lamb* was only a type of our *Redeemer*, ſtill continue to obſerve the ſolemnity, as well as their preſent circumſtances will admit of. The manner of their keeping it is this. On the ſabbath-day, previous to the paſſover, the Jews have a ſermon preached in their ſynagogue on the paſchal lamb ; and two days afterwards, all their furniture muſt be waſhed clean ; — they ſearch their houſes that no leavened bread may be found, and are extremely ſcrupulous in making up the unleavened bread. Moſt commonly, the maſter of the houſe makes it ; and if any of it falls to the ground, the dogs and cats are not ſuffered to eat it. It muſt be kneaded in a place where the ſun does not ſhine ; and the cake, which uſed formerly to be given to the prieſts, is burned to aſhes.

They are obliged to ſit down at a table, like perſons in haſte to begin a journey, in memory of their departure from Egypt.

Egypt. The master of the family sits down with his children and domestics, when some cakes and part of a lamb are set before them; they are then served with a composition of fruits, in a pie, made in the form of a brick, in remembrance of the bricks made by their ancestors in Egypt. They afterwards eat bitter herbs, in remembrance of the bitterness of Egyptian bondage; and the shoulder of a lamb being held up in a dish, the master of the house repeats the following words: *Behold the bread of sorrow and oppression, which our forefathers did once eat in Egypt, let him that is hungry draw near and eat, this is the sacrifice of the paschal lamb.* This ceremony being over, a hymn is sung by all the company present; and when they come to that part, mentioning the ten plagues of Egypt, they pour a little wine on the ground, wishing that those plagues may be far removed from them: — then they drink off the wine, and finish the hymn. The master of the house then washes his hands in clean water, and breaking one of the cakes, presents a part of it to each of the guests; this being done, they begin to eat the lamb; and what is left must be burnt; and the ceremony concludes with a glass of wine.

In this account of the method, in which the modern Jews celebrate the passover, we may observe a great resemblance of the original institution; and, when we consider in what a wonderful manner the Jews, who were formerly a large united body of people, have been dispersed, and what obstructions their religion hath met with, it is astonishing to think, that they have preserved any of their ceremonies.

The feast of the passover* was calculated to furnish an incontestible proof, to succeeding generations, that such an event, as the deliverance of Israel, had happened, because it must have been ordained in the life-time of those who had escaped from the Egyptian bondage; for however their descendants might have listened to fabulous tales, they never could have believed that they themselves had, from their very
infancy,

* Lesley's plain and easy Method with the Jews.

infancy, observed a ceremony in commemoration of a thing, of which they had never before heard; nor would Moses have been so foolish as to attempt to introduce this rite in remembrance of imaginary transactions, and to appeal to the knowledge and experience of six hundred thousand men, each of whom could have proved him an impostor.

We find, from this section, that the lives of children are in the hands of God; and that he can, in an instant of time, frustrate the ambitious views of those, who think only of the worldly prosperity of their offspring. It should therefore be the tender parent's care, to live a course of piety himself, that he may not, by presumptuous sin, provoke the LORD to send this heavy calamity upon him; and to dedicate, from the earliest infancy, not only his *first-born*, but every dear child, which is given him, to the service of God, as Christians, have the blessed opportunity of doing, in the ordinance of baptism, without excluding them from the common offices of life.

S E C T. LXVI.

THE ISRAELITES PASS THROUGH THE RED SEA.
THE EGYPTIANS DROWNED.

AND it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt.

But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up, five in a rank,* out of the land of Egypt.

R

And

* Margin of the Bible.

And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him : for he had straitly sworn the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you ; and ye shall carry up my bones away hence with you.

And they took their journey from Succoth, and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.

And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light : to go by day and night.

He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, over against Baal-zephon : before it shall ye encamp by the sea.

For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are intangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow after them : and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host ; that the Egyptians may know, that I am the LORD. And they did so.

And it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled : and the heart of Pharaoh and of his servants was turned against the people, and they said, Why have we done this, that we have let Israel go from serving us ?

And

And he made ready his chariot, and took his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them.

And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand.

But the Egyptians pursued after them, (all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, before Baal-zephon.

And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid; and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.

And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt.

Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? for it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.

The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.

But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.

And I, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them: and I will get me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon all his host, upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten me honour upon Pharaoh, and upon his chariots, and upon his horsemen.

And the Angel of GOD, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them: and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them.

And it came between the camp of the Egyptians, and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these; so that the one came not near the other all the night.

And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the LORD caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.

And

And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

And they went at large like horses, and leaped like lambs praising the LORD who delivered them*.

And the Egyptians pursued, and went in after them to the midst of the sea, even all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, and his horsemen.

And it came to pass that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily : so that the Egyptians said, let us flee from the face of Israel ; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.

And Moses stretched forth his hand over the sea ; and the sea returned to his strength when the morning appeared : and the Egyptians fled against it : and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.

And the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them : there remained not so much as one of them.

* Wisdom xix. 9.

But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea : and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left.

Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians : and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore.

And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians : and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Had the Israelites been left to follow the dictates of their own minds, in all probability they would have taken the nearest way to the land of Canaan ; but they were very unfit for war, as they were easily intimidated, having had their spirits kept in subjection by severe bondage ; and were therefore utterly unqualified to encounter such formidable enemies as the Philistines, who would naturally oppose the passage of such a numerous body of men through their land. Besides, the Israelites were apt to murmur and repine at every disappointment, and it is likely would have revolted, and joined themselves to other nations, if they had perceived a prospect of present advantage. It certainly was the gracious intention of GOD, not only to bless them, but to teach them how they might pay him acceptable service : and for this purpose also he led them about through the wilderness, that in such a retirement they might without interruption receive and learn those laws his wisdom should ordain for them ; and by degrees, be entirely weaned from idolatrous practices so abominable in his sight ; which there is reason to suppose, many
of

of them were addicted to, and would most likely have retained in the promised land.

We find that the Israelites marched out of Egypt in regular order, and that Moses did not forget to take the bones of Joseph with him: these circumstances prove, that they enjoyed perfect tranquillity of mind, and had no dread of the enemy.

The *pillar of fire*, which went before the Israelites, was a token that the LORD GOD was present with them: of its appearance we can form no idea, for without doubt it was very different from that of common fire, or any other object in nature: one very astonishing particular attended it, which was, that it put on different forms at the same time, affording light to one people, and casting darkness on another. To the Israelites it served not only as a guide in their journeyings, but as a defence from the assaults of their enemies: it covered them from the heat of the sun in the wilderness, where there were but few trees to shelter them; it also served as a standing oracle, to which they might on all occasions resort to know the divine will. This cloud may properly be called the vehicle of the LORD GOD, the place of his majestic presence.

Had not GOD condescended to give a visible token of his presence, the Israelites would scarcely have had courage to leave Etham, and follow Moses; for they were ordered to encamp in a place which was so situated, as to furnish no means of escape from utter destruction, but by the particular providence of their heavenly Leader. On one side of them a range of craggy rocks, on the other (as is supposed) forts and garrisons of the Egyptians; before them the sea, behind them the hosts of their enemies, at whose appearance, in all probability, they had been used to tremble; who had humbled their very souls by their barbarous treatment, and whose commands it was death to dispute: they were strangers to the

arts of war, unskilled to wield the sword, to draw the bow, or throw the spear and lance; nor could they climb the lofty rocks, and hide themselves from the impending dangers; neither were they furnished with vessels, to carry them across the sea in search of a place of refuge or retreat.

The LORD knew * that Pharaoh had not given the Israelites leave to depart in obedience to His commands, but merely from sudden dread of divine vengeance, and that both he and his people would repent and pursue after them; the LORD therefore removed his terror from the minds of Pharaoh and his people, and left them at liberty to follow the dictates of their own obdurate hearts, in consequence of which, while they were yet mourning and making lamentation at the graves of the dead, they committed another act which discovered a mind void of judgment, for hearing that, instead of returning, the Israelites continued their journey, they pursued those as fugitives whom they had just before entreated to be gone †.

To a set of unarmed men, the sight of such a formidable host must have been very dreadful, but after the numerous instances of the power and goodness of the LORD, which they had so recently beheld, the Israelites had sufficient foundation to hope that they should be effectually delivered from their enemies, and therefore it was sinful in them to throw aside their confidence, even while the LORD was visibly among them, but considering them as the posterity of His faithful servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and in remembrance of his covenant, the LORD pardoned their weakness, and animated their faith by fresh promises. Their situation was such, that they could do nothing for themselves: all that God required was, that they should remain quiet, and only observe in what manner He would effect their deliverance.

Whoever has viewed the sea, may easily recollect with what magnificence and strength its waves follow each other;

* Wisdom xix. 1, 2.

† Ibid. 3.

their ordinary force cannot be resisted by the most powerful army ; how wonderful must it then have been to see them dividing and standing still on heaps at the lifting up of Moses' rod !

The ANGEL OF THE LORD undoubtedly was the same Almighty Being who had been to mankind from the creation, the *visible image* of the only true GOD.

It is said, that the pillar of the cloud gave light to the Israelites, but cast darkness upon the Egyptians, from whence we may infer, that the latter had advanced into the sea, before they knew any thing of the miracle that had been wrought.—How great then must have been their consternation, when the glory of the LORD beamed forth and discovered to them the danger of their situation—mountainous waves standing on heaps collected together by that omnipotent Being whom they had so repeatedly offended, and ready to fall on their presumptuous heads !—A sudden conviction of the power of the LORD, and their own weakness, seizing upon their spirits, and impelling them to flee from the unarmed people they were the instant before with full confidence of victory pursuing ! It is likely that in this confusion the Egyptians drove against each other, and by this means broke their chariot wheels.—At length the divine command was given ; Moses again lifted up his rod, and the fate of those who had so long opposed the will of the SOVEREIGN OF THE UNIVERSE, was in an instant determined.—Well might the Israelites fear the LORD, and believe his faithful minister !

From the wonderful history of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, we learn that GOD is undoubtedly the LORD and GOVERNOR of all things ; for every part of nature is subservient to His will, and he can alter or dispose of it according to His pleasure.—Pharaoh himself could not have maintained a contest with GOD for a moment, had not his almighty antagonist armed him with strength to endure his vengeance for the purpose of proving his own omnipotent power.

We also learn from this portion of Sacred History, how displeasing in the sight of GOD are *pride, cruelty, and impiety*: let us therefore be thankful to the LORD for his goodness, and never make an improper use of his gifts, lest we provoke Him to turn them into curses: and let us carefully guard our minds against the first temptations to *presumptuous sin*, by entertaining an humble opinion of ourselves, not omitting to pray to GOD to give us his grace, that we may not fall into hardness of heart, or contempt of His holy will and commandments.

From this part of the History of the Israelites, we may infer, that there is no situation in life, however distressing it may be, but GOD is able to deliver us from it. We must not indeed expect Him to perform miracles in our favour, by changing the course of nature, because miracles have ceased since the establishment of Christianity; but if we read the history of different nations, and observe what passes in the world around us, we may find that his providence frequently interposes in a wonderful manner, to relieve the distresses, and soften the afflictions of those who trust in him. We should therefore pray to him for protection, use the means he has furnished us with for our support, and when danger threatens, or misfortunes befall us, we should then submit to his dispensations with patient resignation, and humble hope of deliverance, by his infinite mercy and goodness.

S E C T. LXVII.

THE SONG OF MOSES.

THEN sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD: for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

The

The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation : he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation ; my father's God, and I will exalt him.

The LORD † is *like* a man of war : the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea : his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea.

The depths have covered them, they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right-hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power : thy right-hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy.

And in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee : thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as stubble.

And with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together : the floods stood upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil : my lust shall be satisfied upon them : I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them.

Thou didst blow with thy wind ; the sea covered them : they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Who is like unto thee, O LORD, amongst the gods ? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders !

R 6

Thou

Thou stretchedst out thy right-hand, the earth swallowed them. Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation.

The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold of the inhabitants of Palestina.

Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed: the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them: all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.

Fear and dread shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone: till thy people pass over, O LORD, till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased.

Thou shalt bring them in and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance; in the place, O LORD, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in; in the sanctuary, O LORD, which thy hands have established.

The LORD shall reign for ever and ever.

For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots, and with his horsemen into the sea, and the LORD brought again the waters of the sea upon them: but the children of Israel went on dry land in the midst of the sea.

And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand: and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances.

And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the LORD; for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This divine song was so admirably adapted to the occasion, that it is needless to write a comment on it ; it conveys a most lively idea of the sense which Moses entertained of the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites. Some parts of it are prophetical, and foretold the subsequent conquests of God's people. We find, from this passage of scripture, that singing of psalms, or devotional songs, was a very antient custom : —when performed with Seriousness and solemnity, it is certainly extremely edifying, and serves to elevate the thoughts to heaven.

Miriam is supposed to have repeated the whole of Moses' song in concert with the women.

S E C T. LXVIII.

THE ISRAELITES MURMUR AGAINST MOSES.
GOD FEEDETH THEM WITH MANNA.

SO Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur, and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah ; for they were bitter : therefore the name of it was called Marah.

And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink ?

And he cried unto the LORD : and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet : there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them :

And

And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes ; I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians : for I am the LORD that healeth thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and three score and ten palm trees : and they encamped there by the waters.

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month, after their departing out of the land of Egypt.

And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and when we did eat bread to the full : for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you ; and the people shall go out, and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no.

And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day, they shall prepare that which they bring in ; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

And

And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt.

And in the morning then shall ye see the glory of the LORD: for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us?

And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full, for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.

And Moses spake unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings.

And it came to pass as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel; speak unto them, saying, At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God.

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host.

And

And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing as small as the hoar frost on the ground.

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is this? * for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.

This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating: an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take ye every man for them which are in his tents.

And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some more, some less.

And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much, had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack: they gathered every man according to his eating.

And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.

Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses: but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank: and Moses was wroth with them.

And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.

And it came to pass that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and

* Marginal translation.

and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD; bake that which ye will bake, to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you to be kept until the morning.

And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

And Moses said, Eat that to-day; for to-day is a sabbath unto the LORD: to-day ye shall not find it in the field.

Six days ye shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.

So the people rested on the seventh day.

And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white, and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.

And Moses said, This is the thing which the LORD commandeth, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your gene-

generations ; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt.

And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the LORD, to be kept for your generations.

As the LORD commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony, to be kept.

And the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited : they did eat manna until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan.

Now an omer is the tenth part of an ephah.

ANNOTATIONS AND RELECTIONS.

The apostle St. Paul teaches us to regard the passage thro' the Red Sea as a *baptism* *. God, of His own free mercy, opened a way for the Israelites to escape from Egyptian bondage ; and received the whole nation under his protection, as His peculiar people. By entering into the sea, each individual expressed his faith in the divine promises. The LORD went before them, to guide them to the land of Canaan. They willingly followed His guidance. From henceforth each person was a member of the Lord's congregation or church, His adopted son, and an inheritor, or heir to the Land of Promise.

The time was not yet come, at which the LORD proposed to destroy the idolatrous nations, and settle His own people in their stead ; besides, the Israelites had contracted many bad habits in Egypt, and their faith in God was very imperfect. He therefore saw fit to expose them to a variety of vicissitudes, partly to improve their minds, and mend their hearts ; and partly,

* 1 Cor. x. 2.

partly, to shew to the world the methods of his Providence towards those whom He acknowledges as His people.

How soon did the Israelites forget the mercy of the LORD, in preserving them from the plagues of Egypt, and delivering them from bondage! On the very first disappointment, they began to murmur against Moses, instead of praying to the LORD to send them relief. It is likely that they began to think that God was going to bring a succession of plagues upon them, as he had done upon Egypt. To remove their apprehensions, the LORD immediately made the bitter water sweet, and commissioned Moses to give them a statute and an ordinance; by the observance of which they might, through His infinite mercy, secure to themselves individually the favour and protection which He had freely granted them as a nation. This law required both *faith* and *obedience*.

Antient historians assert, that there are several fountains of bitter water near the Red Sea; — possibly that at Marah was one of them. The author of the book, Ecclesiasticus, seems to be of opinion, that there was a natural virtue in the wood of the tree, which Moses cast into the fountain, to correct the bitterness*; and that God graciously pointed out this medicine, that its valuable property might be known to the world. Others suppose, that both the bitterness and the correction of it, are to be ascribed to the immediate power of God, who used the wood as a *sign*, rather than an *instrument*; — however this was, the goodness of the LORD was equally displayed to the Israelites. What a pleasing recess must Elim appear, after the turbulent scenes the people had lately passed. Here they had an opportunity of resting themselves, and leisure to meditate on the wonderful goodness of the LORD; — but their all-wise Conductor knew, that continued prosperity would corrupt their minds; and it was proper to put their faith and obedience to the test. How imperfect did these prove on trial! The people saw themselves

in

* Ecclus. xxxviii. 5.

in a wild barren waste, where they thought they had no other chance but to perish with hunger; instead of trusting to the LORD for their relief, they murmured against Moses and Aaron, and foolishly wished to return again to the bondage, from which they had been so lately delivered. To convince them, that He was actually present among them, the LORD promised to give them a view of His Glory. What must have been their confusion, when it beamed forth upon them. — Well might they exclaim, when they saw the Manna, *What is this!* Who could have expected that bread would fall, like rain, from heaven; or that a number of fowls, sufficient to feed so great a multitude, would suddenly come to hand. In what a variety of ways can the Almighty display His power and goodness!

In the middle of April (which was the time of the Israelites encamping in the wilderness) quails are known to fly out of Egypt across the Red Sea in great numbers; — the miracle, consisted in God's directing them to the camp, at the very time He promised to send them.

The author of the Book of Wisdom describes manna, as "*able to content every man's delight, agreeing to every taste.*" * The Lord sent manna from day to day, to make the Israelites sensible of their dependence on him for their daily support. The withholding it on the sabbath day served to keep in mind that it actually came from him, and that they were required to keep that day holy. It was a very astonishing circumstance, as it was of so corruptible nature, that a portion of the manna should be miraculously preserved for so many years. This seems to be the first time that the rest on the seventh day was solemnly appointed to the Israelites as a people. In the family of Abraham, we may presume, the remembrance of the day in which God ceased from the works of Creation was preserved; but during their hard

* Wisdom xvi. 20, 21.

servitude in Egypt, it is likely they were not allowed opportunity of resting from their labour, their deliverance furnished an additional reason for keeping it.

To an attentive observer, great resemblance will appear between the ways of GOD towards the Israelites as *His people* and towards Christians in the same view. The present section affords a lively representation of his goodness to the latter in passing over the natural corruption of their nature, forgiving the offences they had committed before he called them: His opening a way to a heavenly Canaan by means of baptism—requiring faith and obedience on their part—trying them with alternate adversity and prosperity—shewing his glory among them—supplying their temporal necessities, &c.

It is impossible to read an account of the Israelites murmurings and forgetfulness of the divine mercy, without blaming them. While reason leads us to pass condemnation on them, let it awaken conscience to an examination of our own hearts, and if we find there any propensity to return to the *bondage of sin*, let us think of what GOD has done for us. Let us gather up the bread that he has given us from heaven; even the comforts and blessings which flow from our Saviour; and let us keep the LORD's Sabbaths with religious veneration.

S U P P L E M E N T.

When the congregation of Israel removed from Sin, they pitched their tents in a place called Rephidim; here they were distressed for want of water, on which they conceived fears that they should perish with thirst, and began again to murmur against Moses. He endeavoured to persuade them to wait with patience to see what the LORD would do for them,

them, but his remonstrances were vain, and at length the people became so outrageous, that they were almost ready to stone him, on which he had recourse to the LORD, who wrought an astonishing miracle for their relief. GOD informed Moses that He would stand before him (or cause the cloudy pillar to rest) in a certain part of mount Horeb, where there was a rock; this rock he commanded Moses to strike, who did so in the sight of the elders of Israel; on which the flinty stone immediately gushed out with water, which afforded the people a supply, not only during their stay at Rephidim, but in their other encampments afterwards.

This water furnished salutary refreshment to their bodies, but there was a *spiritual rock* which followed them that flowed in streams of mercy, yielding comfort and refreshment to their souls*:—this rock was CHRIST—the LORD Himself, the same Divine Being who is to Christians the *rock of their salvation*. Moses named the place where this miracle was performed, *Massah* and *Meribah*, which signifies *chiding* and *temptation*, because they murmured against him, and tempted the LORD to bring evil upon them, by requiring a sensible proof of His divine presence among them, of which they had had such repeated proofs.

While the Israelites continued at Rephidim, the Amalekites, a people descended from Amalek, the son of Eliphez, one of the sons of Esau, came out against them; upon which Moses directed Joshua, a valiant young man, to draw out a party of the choicest men in the camp, and go out to meet them; promising at the same time that he would stand on the top of the rock with the rod of GOD in his hand, during the engagement. Joshua obeyed, and Moses with Aaron and Hur ascended the mount: in this conspicuous situation Moses appeared as the minister of the LORD, and to shew that victory depended entirely on the divine will, whenever

* 1 Cor. x. 4.

he held up his rod, Israel prevailed; but when he let it down Amalek prevailed; at length the strength of Moses being exhausted by standing in one posture, he sat down on a stone, and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, till the going down of the sun, at which time Joshua gained a complete victory over the Amalekites. It is supposed that the Israelites had furnished themselves with swords as well as abundance of other spoils, when the bodies of the Egyptians, who were overthrown in the Red Sea, were cast on shore.

After the battle was over, Moses was commanded to write it for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of all the people, that God would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven, and that He had sworn to have war with the Amalekites, from generation to generation; because, on this occasion they had the presumption to lift up their hands against the throne of the LORD; (that is against God himself) and the LORD knew, that future generations would do the same.

It certainly was a very inhuman action in the Amalekites to attack this people, if they supposed them to be defenceless; but as they were descendants of Esau, it is most likely that they knew God had pre-ordained to put the Israelites in possession of the land of Canaan; and that trusting in the aid of false gods, they came out against them with the hope of frustrating the designs of the LORD.

Moses named the place where this victory was obtained, JEHOVAH Nissi; that is, the LORD is my banner.

The defeat of the Amalekites opened a way for the Israelites to mount Sinai, where God first appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and not far from the place where Jethro his father-in-law dwelt; who having heard of the wonderful things which had been done for him and the people he conducted, took his daughter Zipporah, Moses' wife; and her two sons, Gershom and Eliezar, and brought them to the Israelitish camp.

camp. This meeting gave great joy to all parties. Moses related what wonderful things had been effected by the power of the LORD; and Jethro, who was a devout man, offered up praises to GOD, saying, "Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them." He also joined with Moses, and the rest of the elders of Israel, in offering sacrifices, and in such other holy rejoicings, as their circumstances suggested.

While Jethro continued in the camp he observed that Moses had a great weight of business, in hearing complaints and determining differences among so numerous a people; he therefore gave him advice to appoint under him a number of inferior officers, men of ability, such as feared God, adhered to truth, and hated covetousness, to be rulers some over thousands, some over hundreds, some over fifties, and some over tens, with proper authority to hear and determine all such matters as they were able; but in cases too difficult for their decision, to refer to him.—As soon as Jethro saw his advice put in execution, he took leave of his son-in-law, and departed into his own country. Jethro shewed himself to be, not only a good, but a wise man; for the directions he gave to Moses, furnish excellent hints for the choice of magistrates, and officers of justice in general.

S E C T. LXIX.

THE LAW GIVEN BY GOD FROM MOUNT SINAI
—MOSES ASCENDS THE MOUNTAIN—BOUNDS
PRESCRIBED TO THE PEOPLE.

IN the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel camped before the mount.

And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles wings, and brought you unto myself.

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me, above all people: for all the earth is mine.

And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

S

And

And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken, we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people and sanctify them to day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day, for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount, shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned or shot through: whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes. And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day.

And

And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp, trembled.

And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire, with thousands of his angels*: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai, on the top of the mount; and the LORD called Moses up to the top of the mount, and Moses went up.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go down, charge the people, lest they break through unto the LORD to gaze, and many of them perish. And let the priests also which come near to the LORD, sanctify themselves, lest the LORD break forth upon them.

And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai; for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it.

* Ps. lxxviii 17.

And the LORD said unto him, Away, get thee down, and thou shalt come up, thou and Aaron with thee: but let not the priests and the people break through, to come up unto the LORD, lest he break forth upon them.

So Moses went down unto the people, and spake unto them.

And God spake all these words, saying,

I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son,
not

nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and heard the noise of the trumpet, and beheld the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not GOD speak with us, lest we die.

And Moses said unto the people, Fear not; for GOD is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not.

And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where GOD was.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Thus thou shalt say unto the children of Israel, Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven.

Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a wonderful event is here recorded. It is impossible surely to read it, without being filled with the utmost reverence and veneration. It happened exactly three months after the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt.

The LORD was now going to enter into covenant with the people whom He had *saved* and *redeemed* out of the land of Egypt. He designed to bestow great honours and privileges upon them; but expected that they would comply with certain conditions, which he should require on their part.—The advantages which, in his message by Moses, God proposed to the Israelites, were astonishingly great—To be the *peculiar treasure* of that GREAT BEING, who is the proprietor of the whole universe—A *kingdom of priests*, or a kingly priesthood, authorised to offer up sacrifices acceptable to God; and to be an *holy nation* sanctified by the *visible presence* of the LORD GOD among them.—All that the LORD expected in return, was, that they should willingly obey His commands, and keep His covenant.

There was such amazing condescension and goodness in this proposal, that no rational being could hesitate a moment in expressing a ready concurrence with it.

To prevent the Israelites from entertaining any suspicion that Moses deceived them, the LORD promised to appear Himself, for the purpose of entering into this covenant with
His

His people; but required Moses to *sanctify* them, by withdrawing them from secular employments, in order to give them time to prepare their minds for the approaching solemnity; and also to wash their apparel, that they might, when they approached the *Divine presence*, be as free from defilement, both in body and soul, as they could possibly render themselves.

Hitherto the Israelites had seen the LORD only in His wonderful works, and in the pillar of the cloud, which, tho' a pledge and token of His presence, gave no idea of His Divine Majesty.—Little did they conceive what an awful scene was preparing for their view. It was highly proper to assign bounds to them, that they might keep at a respectful distance from that sacred spot, chosen by the LORD for Himself and his heavenly attendants.

As there was no regular order of priesthood at that time, we may suppose, that heads of families were the priests here mentioned.

At length the expected day arrived, and the LORD *descended* (or made the *presence* of the DEITY manifest) on Sinai. The ever memorable morn was ushered in with the sound of the trumpet of the Archangel. The ALMIGHTY, making the clouds His chariots*, came flying upon the wings of the wind†; He covered Himself with light as with a garment, and was cloathed with majesty and honour‡. The pavilion of the High and Lofty-One that inhabiteth eternity, a thick cloud and impenetrable darkness||, in which His ineffable glory veiled itself from mortal eyes, was pitched on the Holy mountain. The earth shook, and the heavens also dropped at the presence of GOD; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of GOD, the GOD of Israel§.—Thousands of celestial spirits, shining in immortal

* Ps. civ. 3.

† Ps. xviii. 10.

‡ Ps. civ. 1. 2.

|| Ps. xviii. 11.

§ Ps. lxviii. 8.

beauty, surrounded the darkness that covered the glory of the LORD *. Their appearance was like flames of fire; and out of the fire went forth lightnings †. At the sound of the trumpet the people are said to have trembled:—What must then have been their sensations, when, coming forth to meet their GOD, they beheld the glorious spectacle, of which the words even of the inspired writers can give but a faint idea? Strengthened to sustain the heavenly vision, Moses spake unto the LORD: what he said, is not related; but we may conjecture, that it was something expressive of the people's penitence.—To shew his kindness to them, the LORD called Moses (who acted as a *Mediator* between Him and the Israelites) up to the top of the mount; and after repeating His charge, that the people might not break the prescribed bounds, the LORD spake all the words of that excellent law, called the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, every sentence of which demands particular examination, as the observance of its precepts makes a principal part of the Christian religion; and this law will never be abolished as long as the world lasts §.

We may assure ourselves, that this law was spoken by God Himself. Had it proceeded from an *angel*, or any *created being*, it certainly would have tended to lead the Israelites into the very crime they were repeatedly required to avoid, that of idolatry; for the people would naturally worship Him, who declared himself to be the GOD, to whom their adoration was due ‡.

What Christian, that calls to mind the solemnity with which the law was given from Mount Sinai, and that it was designed to be of perpetual obligation to all those who should

* Ps. lxxviii. 17. † Ezek. i. 13.

§ It were superfluous to write a particular comment on the Decalogue, as every Catechism furnishes an explanation of the Commandments.

‡ Exod. xxi. 1.

be considered by God as His *peculiar treasure*—a *kingdom of priests*—a *holy nation*—can forbear to practice its Divine precepts?—By obeying the voice of our LORD, and keeping His covenant, Christians can alone secure to themselves these honourable distinctions. Let us then pay grateful homage to that transcendantly glorious BEING, who delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage, and us from the *bondage of sin*; and let us make His Divine precepts the rule of all our actions.

The LAW, we find, was given with such proofs of the greatness and majesty of God, that the people were ready to die with fear and apprehensions, and requested that, for the future, Moses might be their mediator. Moses endeavoured to remove their terrors, by assuring them, that the ALMIGHTY only meant to prove to them, that He was above all the heathen gods; and that this tremendous ceremony was intended, not to impress their minds with a slavish fear, but only to excite reverence, and restrain them from the commission of presumptuous sin.

Having said that Moses was henceforth to be a *Mediator* between God and the people of Israel, it is necessary to observe, that the word *Mediator* signifies one who acts as a peace-maker, or intercessor, between two contending parties; or as a deputy and representative of each to the other, as occasion may require.

It is to be particularly observed, that the Israelites were commanded not to make to themselves *gods of silver or gold*. This may be done without making graven images; for whoever suffers riches to occupy that place in his affections, which the Deity ought to fill, or puts his trust in them, makes a God of them.

S E C T. LXX.

DIVINE PRECEPTS.

AND the LORD said unto Moses, He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.

And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ye shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child.

If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry.

And my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless.

Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil: neither shalt thou speak in a cause, to decline after many, to wrest judgment.

If thou meet thine enemies ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.

If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help with him.

Keep

Keep thee far from a false matter: and the innocent and the righteous slay thou not: for I will not justify the wicked.

And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.

Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared.

Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him.

But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.

For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In addition to the Decalogue, Moses received a number of ceremonial, political, and moral laws; the former related solely to the Jewish constitution, and are abolished; but those of a moral tendency are calculated for the whole race of mankind, and are worthy of the attention of Christians. This section consists of an abstract of them.

It appears perfectly just and equitable, that he who takes another's life should forfeit his own, because it is impossible for him to make restitution.

The unnatural crime of striking a parent, one who is the cause of so much good to us, is also deserving of capital punishment, though our laws do not take cognizance of it.

How uncomfortable must it appear to a foreigner, to be amongst a set of people who endeavour to oppress him ! How engaging the behaviour of those who do him good offices !

If we Christians were not strangers in Egypt, we are at least strangers and pilgrims upon earth, and therefore should treat our fellow travellers with kindness and humanity.

Those persons surely must have hearts of flint, who can forbear to relieve the fatherless and widow ; but if any unfeeling wretches are so inhuman as to injure them, they justly provoke the wrath of God to expose the tenderest objects of *their* love to the same calamities they bring on others. God is so merciful, that the widows and orphans, even of bad men, may still look up with confidence and hope to him, if they endeavour to render themselves objects of his favour.

Many people have a kind of false shame, which often restrains them from good actions, and leads them into wicked ones, merely for the sake of being fashionable ; but we should resolve to be singular rather than sinful ; it is no excuse in God's sight, that we may have many companions in guilt.

It is a proof of generosity and greatness of mind to return good for evil, in humble imitation of the supreme Being ; and on the contrary, it shews great meanness of spirit, to extend our resentment against any person to their domestic animals ; for they have never offended us, whatever their owners may have done.

It appears from those precepts that relate to brute animals, that the LORD remembered the everlasting covenant, in which they were included after the flood ; and that the institution of
the

the Sabbath was partly designed for their benefit; we ought therefore to pay a tender regard to their rest and happiness.

The Angel whom GOD promised to send to keep His people in the way, could be no other than the ANGEL OF THE LORD, His DIVINE IMAGE. He certainly cannot justly be regarded as a *created being*, for no one could have the *name of GOD* in him, who was not of the same nature, for we have already seen that this great name, viz. I AM THAT I AM, is incommunicable to any creature. If it was dangerous for the Israelites to disobey Him to whom the name of GOD so essentially belonged, it must be equally so for Christians to dishonour Him, since it is He alone that can keep them in the way of everlasting life.

S E C T. LXXI.

MOSES AGAIN ASCENDS THE MOUNT.
JOSHUA AND THE ELDERS BEHOLD THE GLORY
OF GOD.

AND GOD said unto Moses, Come up unto the LORD, thou and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and worship ye afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the LORD: but they shall not come nigh; neither shall the people go up with him.

And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said, will we do.

And

And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the LORD.

And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said, will we do, and be obedient.

And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words.

Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel.

And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire-stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

And upon the nobles of the children of Israel, he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee
tables

tables of stone, and a law, and commandments, which I have written, that thou mayest teach them.

And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua : and Moses went up into the mount of God.

And he said unto the elders, Tarry ye here for us, until we come again unto you ; and behold Aaron and Hur are with you : if any man have any matters to do, let him come unto them.

And Moses went up into the mount, and a cloud covered the mount.

And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days : and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount, in the eyes of the children of Israel.

And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount : and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep : for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations ; that ye may know that I am the LORD, that doth sanctify you.

Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore : for it is holy unto you. Every one that defileth it, shall surely be put to death ; for whosoever doeth any work therein,

therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people.

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to death.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident, from the beginning of this section, that neither Moses or the people had yet beheld the IMAGE OF GOD in the refulgence of Divine majesty. At the first visible manifestation of the DEITY to him, Moses saw a burning bush, from the midst of which GOD called unto him. On other occasions, during the plagues of Egypt, he heard the words of the LORD, and it is likely saw some token of the *Divine presence*; perhaps the cloudy pillar that afterwards went before the Israelites. From this pillar, which, (as we have before observed) might justly be denominated the



the *vehicle* of the LORD GOD, a glimpse of His glory darted on the people, sufficient to convince them that He was actually present, and heard their murmurings for want of flesh and bread.—When the Law was spoken on mount Sinai, they only heard a voice, they saw no similitude * ; for the LORD GOD was hid, by clouds and thick darkness, from the eyes even of Moses, who was permitted to approach much nearer to the pavilion of the ETERNAL KING, than any of the Israelites :—the honour of beholding Him was reserved for the time when He should personally ratify the covenant He had proposed to His people. GOD required that they should first testify their acceptance of the conditions specified : this we find, they did, by declaring their readiness to do all that the LORD had said. As soon as the people had given their assent, Moses wrote the Covenant in a book, that it might be formally sealed.

It appears, from different parts of Scripture, that, according to the appointment of GOD, remission of sins was to be granted to mankind through the blood of the REDEEMER †. Till the time should be accomplished for the shedding of this, the blood of beasts was constituted, as a sacramental representation of it, signifying, that the LORD would give those, who had faith in Him, and practised the obedience He required, an interest in the great sacrifice, that would be offered for mankind in general, so that they should enjoy the benefits it was designed to purchase.

It was observed in the history of Abraham, that the LORD made two covenants with him ‡, both of which were solemnly ratified and confirmed, the first by a Divine promise on GOD's part, that He would fulfil the conditions of it, and on Abrahams by sacrificing animals ;—the latter by an OATH on GOD's part, and on Abraham's by offering his son.

* Deut. iv. 12, 15.

† Matt. xxvi. 28. Rom. iii. 25.

‡ See Sections 13, 17, 19, and 24.

The covenant which the LORD made with the Israelites on mount Sinai, was to them a renewal of the *first* of these covenants, and related to their *temporal* state, as the descendants of Abraham.—The *everlasting* covenant which related to the *spiritual* concerns of all who should at any time come under the denomination of GOD's people, operated unperceived by them for many ages, till *grace* and *truth* came by JESUS CHRIST *; but its benefits were conveyed to the Israelites, through the *temporal* covenant, till the time should come for the ratification of the *spiritual* covenant. As the *everlasting* covenant was to be sealed with the blood of the REDEEMER, it was requisite that the *temporal* covenant should be sealed with that of his appointed representative: on this account Moses made use of the blood of beasts, as is here described. The twelve pillars which he erected, were designed as memorials to each separate tribe, of the alliance they were going to make with GOD. By sprinkling the altar, Moses dedicated that to the purpose of receiving the sacrifices which were afterwards to be made on it, and by this means it became a witness to the contract.—By sprinkling the book, he made that a witness also; and by sprinkling the people, he signified that the LORD accepted their sacrifices, and was ready to ratify the covenant with them, and consider them as His *elect* people.

In all civil contracts, it is usual to have two copies, one for each party: in like manner was the LORD's Covenant conducted; one copy was written by Moses, as has been already related: the other was written by the finger of GOD. That Moses might not be suspected of collusion in this important affair, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to appear before a number of witnesses, who were the chief heads of the families of the Israelites, men of approved abilities and integrity †, in order to convince them, that He was actually present.

* John i. 17.

† See Exod. xviii. 21.

What a wonderful vision were Moses and his companions honoured with!—from the short description which is given of it, we may judge, that it agreed with those which the prophets afterwards had; exceeding every object in the whole creation for brightness and beauty; but so moderated, that human nature might sustain it*.

As the LORD had many instructions to give to Moses, He called him up into the mount, and the glorious scene which had been just exhibited was hidden from view. Moses was left to reflect on the vision; and to exercise his faith, he waited till the return of the next Sabbath, before he received any farther communications from the LORD.

It seems, that there was, in many particulars, great resemblance between the religious ceremonies of the heathens, and those of the patriarchs, during the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for each built altars of stone or earth, and offered sacrifices on them, but the former paid these divine honours to idols; the latter to the LORD, *the living GOD*.

While the people of Israel abode in Egypt, they were either addicted to idolatry, or extremely inattentive to religion; and had, in a great measure, lost the knowledge of the LORD, which Moses was sent to restore. They had been so accustomed to see a *ceremonial* worship, that they would not readily have received a religion purely *spiritual*; therefore GOD, in condescension to their ignorance, and with a view of representing in a *sensible* manner, divine things, resolved to convey instruction by a variety of ceremonies calculated to distinguish Him as the SUPREME GOD, and them as His peculiar church, who were to shew forth His name and honour to the world, by such forms of worship as bore evident marks of holiness, dignity, and purity, in opposition to the worshipers of idols, who had introduced into their sacrifices the most shocking absurdities that can be imagined.

* Isa. vi. Ezch. i. 10. Rev. i. 4.

We have reason to suppose, as has been observed before, that from the beginning of the world, while the worship of the LORD GOD remained uncorrupted, some particular place was distinguished by a visible token of the Divine Presence, for we read that in the days of Enos, men began to call upon the name of the LORD *; or, as it is understood to mean, joined in public worship of the LORD GOD.

When the Israelites were separated from the idolatrous nations, they received evident proofs that GOD was among them, by the appearance of the cloudy pillar; and as He promised to display His glory to them in a distinguishing manner, He required them to make a Sanctuary, or Holy Place, in which he promised to manifest His Divine Presence on solemn occasions.

GOD could undoubtedly have received the adorations of His people in Heaven; but as the LORD vouchsafed to be the KING of the Israelites, He chose to have an earthly palace, or Tabernacle, to which they should repair, to do Him homage, by offering the sacrifices He was pleased to ordain, accompanied with prayer and thanksgiving. During His long abode in the mount, Moses received ample instructions concerning the tabernacle, its appurtenances, and the ceremonies which the LORD required to be observed in His worship; of which we shall give an account in a following section.

As soon as Man was created, he received command to keep the Sabbath day holy, because, on it the Almighty rested from all His work; and, without doubt, this custom was observed by Seth and all the descendants of Adam, as long as they retained the worship of the true GOD; but long before the time of the Israelites sojourning in the wilderness, idolatry had taken place, and many nations had quite set aside this institution, and forgot the occasion of it; therefore the strict observance of it was enforced upon the Israelites, as

* See Section 4.

soon as they were separated from heathen nations, as GOD's peculiar people; and it was appointed by the LORD as a *sign* to distinguish them from idolators, and as a lasting token of His covenant, so that it might be considered as the ground-work of all their ordinances.

As the people of Israel were to have so much work assigned them to be done with expedition, they might have imagined themselves exempted for a time from a regular observance of the Sabbath; therefore Moses was commissioned to tell them expressly, that they must on no pretence prophane it.

The tables of testimony contained the Ten Commandments; and were, in all probability, a counterpart of the Testimony written by Moses.—These tables are said to have been written with the *finger of GOD*, because the writing was impressed on them by His immediate power, not by human instruments.

This section furnishes us with an additional proof, that there is in the GODHEAD, a *visible Image*, who is to be honoured as GOD. It also teaches us the great importance of a religious observance of the Sabbath day, to those who call themselves the people of GOD.

If we Christians lay aside worldly pursuits, and spend this holy season in works of piety and charity (as the LORD directs) it will be inconsidered by Him as a *sign* that we love and honour Him; and the inward satisfaction and other blessings which He will fallibly bestow on us for doing so, will be a sign that GOD loves us.—Nothing will so effectually separate us from wicked and profligate persons, nor more eminently recommend us to the favour of the good part of the world, as the servants of the living GOD, than a strict regard to the Sabbath day. If so, ought it not to be our great concern, not only to employ it well ourselves, but to instruct the ignorant to do the same?

S E C T. LXXII.

THE ISRAELITES WORSHIP THE GOLDEN CALF.

AND when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden ear-rings which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

And all the people brake off the golden ear-rings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings: and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

And

And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down : for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them : they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people.

Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them : and I will make of thee a great nation.

And Moses besought the LORD his GOD, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?

Wherefore should the Egyptians speak and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people.

Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.

And

And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount; and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand: the tables were written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other were they written.

And the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

And when Joshua heard the noise of the people, as they shouted, he said unto Moses, there is a noise of war in the camp.

And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing, do I hear.

And it came to pass as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

And

And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off; so they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

And when Moses saw that the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame amongst their enemies)

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother: that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

T

And

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin : and now I will go up unto the LORD ; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

Yet now if thou wilt, forgive their sin : and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee : behold, mine angel shall go before thee : nevertheless, in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them.

And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people, which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, unto thy seed will I give it :

And I will send an angel before thee : and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite :

Unto a land flowing with milk and honey ; for I will not go up in the midst of thee ; for thou art a stiff-necked people, lest I consume thee in the way.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How strange does it appear, that in so short a time after the wonders they had both seen and heard, and just after they had ratified the Covenant with the LORD, the Israelites should fall into idolatry! It seems they were impatient to pursue their journey; and, perhaps, supposed that Moses had perished in the devouring fire that appeared on the top of the mountain; and that the cloudy pillar would no longer guide them towards Canaan, and therefore resolved to have some visible representation of GOD, according to the practice of the heathens among whom they had lived, who made images of imaginary deities. What the particular form of this idol was, is not material to us; but, from its being called a calf, it is supposed to have been made in imitation of the god Apis, a bull, which was worshipped by the Egyptians, and which they used to conduct in great triumph to Memphis, their capital city.

Our own reason will tell us, that the setting up of this idol was a very atrocious crime; especially as GOD had made it a part of the Covenant, that they should not make to themselves *graven images*, or set up any thing in competition with the DIVINE IMAGE, who was *very GOD of very GOD*.

The people had without doubt justly incurred the displeasure of GOD; but the SUPREME BEING is not like mankind, subject to a variety of conflicting passions, which agitate the mind, and sometimes rise to such a height as to produce revenge, hatred, and malice:—He is at all times the same; no malignancy influences Him. When, therefore, we read, that GOD *was angry*, and that *His wrath waxed hot*, &c. we are to understand, that the wickedness

of men deserved that His justice should punish them with such severity as wrath and anger would suggest: and when it is said in Scripture, that GOD *repented*, we are to understand, that His *mercy* abated the rigour of the sentence.

The LORD had already determined what he would do, in respect to his rebellious people, namely, to accept of the intercession of their mediator, and save them, as a *nation*, for his sake; but that Moses might have an opportunity of shewing the regard which he had for the honour of GOD, and the extent of his love for the Israelites, the LORD did not make known this purpose to him, but gave him opportunities of expressing his sentiments.

The first intercession which Moses made, shewed, that the honour of the LORD was his principal object. The arguments he used were such as would justify GOD in sparing the people; and GOD acted by the Israelites in conformity to these arguments, sparing that nation, for *His oath's sake*, which had forfeited the privileges He had granted them.

No wonder that Moses was provoked to so great a degree, when he found the Israelites in the very act of rebellion against their Heavenly King; or that he should break the Tables of the Testimony, when they had broken the covenant. The honour of GOD was concerned that he should do so; for it was unreasonable that one party should be bound, while the other refused to be held by the obligation.

From the excuse that Aaron made for himself, he seems to have been influenced by fear of the people; while those, who required him to make a god for them, acted from a rebellious presumptuous spirit: as his was the sin of *infirmity*, he met with mercy; but it was the will of the LORD that the *presumptuous sinner* should be cut off*.

It is said, that *Aaron had made the people naked to their enemies*: the meaning of this expression is, that having for-

* Numbers xv. 27, &c.

feited the protection, which GOD had promised to them while they adhered to Him, they were now in a defenceless state.

It is very shocking to read of people's slaying their own relations; but we must observe, that it was at GOD's command; and there is reason to believe, that those who were killed by the Levites, were the very persons who had been guilty of presumptuous sin, by casting off their obedience to the LORD, and worshipping the idol, as the representative of some imaginary god.

When these were dead, Moses, most likely, was directed by a Divine impulse to endeavour to make an *atonement* for the rest, who, perhaps, had joined in the offence through ignorance, fear, inconsideration, &c. which, tho' very sinful, did not exclude them from the *forgiveness* of GOD. Every act of wickedness, strictly speaking, is a *sin against* GOD; but those offences, which have a direct tendency to dishonour His Holy Name, are called emphatically, *sins against* GOD.

It is evident, that Moses greatly regretted the necessity he had been under, to command the Levites to cut off the presumptuous sinners; and that he wished to preserve the *nation*, even at the expence of his own life.—The expression, *Blot me out of thy book*, &c. signifies, *Let me die rather than see them cast out from thy favour, and exterminated from the earth.*

The intercession having been made, GOD assured Moses, that the Israelites should be saved: He gave them to *him*, and promised that He would, for his sake, and for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, preserve them, and put them into possession of the land of Canaan.

The ANGEL, who is here promised, is evidently the same Divine Being that is mentioned in a former section*, viz.

* See Section 70.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, or, as He is frequently called, the PRESENCE of the LORD, infinitely superior to all creatures. According to the rules of Divine justice, God could not, without destroying them, go up in the midst of a people, who had so heinously offended Him, as they had not yet as a *nation* humbled themselves, and obtained His pardon: but we shall find that, when they did this, He suffered the intercession of Moses to prevail, and then went up in the midst of them.

We learn from this section, that the appointed mediator of a covenant between God and a people separated to Him, *might* make intercession and atonement for the sins of the latter, and God would spare them for his sake, provided he was willing to suffer in their stead the punishment due to their sin.

As the LORD accepted the Mediator of the *Temporal Covenant*, and remitted the punishment of *temporal death*, which the Jews as a body of people had incurred by apostacy, we may be certain, that the intercession of the Mediator of the *Everlasting Covenant* has prevailed, so as to preserve the body of people for whom he interceded, from *eternal death*: in respect to *individuals*, those who refuse to fulfil the conditions of the Covenant, will certainly be cut off from the community to whom the privileges of the Covenant were promised.

S E C T. LXXIII.

MOSES DESIRES TO BEHOLD THE GLORY OF GOD
—THE NAME OF THE LORD PROCLAIMED—
A COVENANT MADE.

AND when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments.

For

For the LORD had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee; therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, that I may know what to do unto thee.

And the children of Israel stript themselves of their ornaments by the mount Horeb.

And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the Congregation.

And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent-door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle.

And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the LORD talked with Moses.

And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle-door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent-door.

And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou

haft said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my fight.

Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy fight, shew me now thy way that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy fight: and consider that this nation is thy people.

And God said, My Presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.

And Moses said unto him, If thy Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.

For wherein shall it be known here, that I and thy people have found grace in thy fight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.

And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my fight; and I know thee by name.

And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

And God said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.

And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock:

And

And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by.

And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone, like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables, the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest.

And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.

And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount: neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.

And Moses hewed two tables of stone like unto the first: and he rose up early in the morning, and went up into mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.

And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD GOD, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the

children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go amongst us; (for it is a stiff-necked people:) and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people, amongst which thou art, shall see the work of the LORD, for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.

Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

Take heed to thyself lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee.

But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.

For thou shalt worship no other GOD: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous GOD.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words; for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.

And

And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And God wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

And it came to pass when Moses came down from mount Sinai (with the two tables of testimony in Moses's hand, when he came down from the mount) that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, while God talked with him.

And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.

And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.

And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

And it came to pass that every one who fought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation that was without the camp.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The LORD, (as we read in the last section) graciously accepted the intercession of Moses for the Israelitish *nation*, but in respect to *individuals*, their being *saved* or *blotted out* still depended upon the will of the LORD, who alone had the power of discriminating fit objects of his *justice* or his *mercy*.

No greater misfortune could befall the Israelites, than that of GOD's withdrawing his Presence from them.—It was very proper that they should be made sensible of the danger to which their rebellion had exposed them; and that, before they received pardon, each person should humble himself in the sight of the Great Being, whom they had offended.

It seems that though the tabernacle in which the law was to be deposited, was not yet made; there was a temporary one, to which they resorted for public worship; this they had now no right to enter, as they were no longer GOD's people, but consigned to Moses.

To signify that the PRESENCE of the LORD would not abide in the midst of them, Moses removed this tabernacle to a distance from the camp, while the people, not daring to approach, remained at their tent doors. Joshua alone entered the tabernacle; he had not been a partaker of the people's sin. With Moses, as the *mediator*, the LORD condescended to hold a conference—The words which GOD spake upon this occasion, are not recorded; but we may judge of their import, by the reply which Moses made. It seems that Moses was in a state of great perplexity; the LORD had given him assurances of his favour to himself, and had commanded him to conduct the
people

people towards Canaan; but having declared, that *whosoever had sinned against Him, He would blot out of his book*, Moses did not understand whether *all* the people were to go, or whether some were first to be cut off by Divine vengeance; he therefore wished to have the way of the LORD made plain to him, that he might know how to serve Him in an acceptable manner.—To calm this apprehension, the LORD assured him that His Presence should go with him, &c. The expression, *I know thee by name*, signifies, that the LORD admitted him to an extraordinary degree of familiarity with Him.—Moses's wish to see the glory of the LORD, seems to have included a desire to understand the Divine nature, and to know the LORD as He is.—In this particular, Moses aspired to a degree of knowledge above the reach of his faculties; but as he was actuated, not by curiosity, but by a sincere desire of paying due honour to Him, the LORD was not displeased, but promised to make such a display of his perfections, as should convince Moses that He is of a kind and beneficent nature; and lest Moses should suppose that he had a *right* to the information he requested, the LORD taught him to consider the revelation He was going to make as an act of His free grace and favour.

Whether Moses went into a clift of the rock, or was contented with a milder display of the glory of the LORD, is not related, but he was certainly convinced, that it was GOD himself that talked with him; and we may understand, that the beauty, splendor, and magnificence, with which the LORD GOD makes His presence visible, in Heaven, to superior beings, is such, as human nature, with its present infirmities, cannot behold and live.

By the Face of GOD, I think we may understand, the DIVINE IMAGE in the resplendency of Heavenly glory, as He appears to the angelic host; by his back parts this glory moderated;—By GOD's covering Moses with his hand, perhaps

is meant, that He fortified him against those fatal effects of astonishment, which, without Divine support, such a vision would have produced.

By *proclaiming His name*, we may understand, that the LORD vouchsafed to make known His nature and attributes. From this proclamation we learn, that the GOD of *Israel* is the SUPREME BEING, the LORD of the whole creation—The same who was known in His *Divine Image* as the LORD GOD; that He is by nature *merciful*, &c. but at the same time *just*; and that he is a *jealous* GOD; that is to say, He requires to be honoured by His creatures above all Beings, and will not suffer any thing to stand in competition with Him, to assume those titles, or receive that homage which is due to Him alone.

As soon as Moses was assured that the LORD *would* pardon transgression and sin, he intreated Him to forgive the iniquity of the Israelites; which, in consideration of Moses's intercession, and the penitence they had lately expressed, GOD of His infinite mercy did; and received them again into favour, on conditions consistent with His honour, and their duty.

Without doubt, Moses was joyfully received by the repentant Israelites, when he returned from the Mount with the Testimony of the Covenant in his hands. As the Mediator of this Covenant, the LORD distinguished him from the people, by shedding a visible glory on him. This served to confirm their belief in the relation which Moses doubtless gave, of what had lately been revealed to him.

In this section we perceive the value of Divine Revelation; without this, the nature and attributes of the SUPREME BEING could not have been ascertained; for supposing that mankind could have discovered by the light of *reason*, that GOD was *good*, *gracious*, and *merciful*, they could not have been absolutely sure that He would *pardon sin*; neither could

could they have known that He would not *clear the guilty*; that is to say, pass over guilt, without some atonement being made for it; and this ignorance might have occasioned them to fall into the extremes of slavish fear, or ill-founded confidence.

It certainly must have afforded great satisfaction to Moses and the Israelites, to know what kind of a Being God is, in respect to His Divine attributes; and Christians may meditate on this portion of Scripture with delight and advantage.—If God is *merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth*, He has a just claim to our love, gratitude, and obedience.—If he will not *clear the guilty*, but visit the sin, for which atonement is not made, and pardon obtained, upon children's children, unto the third and fourth generation, we should be careful to avoid sin, and desirous to receive His gracious pardon, through our Mediator, who has made atonement for the sins of the *whole world*, but whose *intercession* is still necessary for *individuals*.

From the remarkable instance which is here recorded of the favour of the LORD to Moses, we learn, that the ALMIGHTY is not displeased with those who wish to know Him; and we may assure ourselves, that though He does not visibly appear to us, He will display His attributes to the minds of those who truly love Him, so that they shall sensibly feel, that *He is good and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth*.

S U P P L E M E N T.

It was mentioned in a former section, that the LORD required a Sanctuary or Tabernacle to be made, which was to serve as a receptacle for the ark, and as a place of public worship

worship for the congregation, during the first forty days that Moses abode on the Mount. He received particular directions concerning the form, dimensions, materials, and appurtenances of the Tabernacle; but before he returned to the people, they had worshipped the golden calf, and so greatly offended the LORD, that, instead of permitting them to make a *Sanctuary* for Him to dwell amongst them, He commanded Moses to remove the tent in which they had been accustomed to offer their public devotions: this was a *sign* or *token* of His withdrawing His *presence* from them. In the present section, and others immediately preceding it, we have an account of the reconciliation, which, through Divine goodness, was effected between the LORD and His people, by the mediation of Moses.—The favour of GOD being thus happily restored, He vouchsafed to draw near to them again; and to shew that He meant to dwell or abide with them, gave to Moses a fresh testimony of his willingness to renew the covenant they had so abominably violated before.—Having received the tables of the law, Moses gathered the people together, and after giving them a strict injunction to keep the Sabbath-day holy, as the *sign* that was above all things to distinguish them as the people of the LORD: he called upon every man who had a willing heart to make an offering of gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine linen, ram skins, badger skins, and Shittim-wood, oil, spices, and precious stones; and upon all who had skill and ingenuity, to assist in making the Tabernacle and its appurtenances, and also the priests' garments.

No sooner was this summons issued, than a general emulation prevailed among the people, both men and women; and quantities of gold, silver, jewels, and other precious materials, which they had brought out of Egypt, and hitherto had no use for, were in a short time collected.

Moses

Moses then informed them, that the LORD had chosen two men, named Bezaleel, of the tribe of Judah, and Aholiab, of the tribe of Dan, to be master-workmen; and had inspired them with wisdom, so that, without any human instruction, they should be able to contrive all kinds of curious works for the ornaments of the Tabernacle, &c. He then called for Bezaleel and Aholiab, and other men, who were also filled with ingenuity by the spirit of the LORD, and committed to them the offerings which the people had brought, and they immediately set about the necessary preparations.

Such an ardent desire now prevailed among the people, to shew their attachment to the LORD, that every morning and evening one or other brought fresh offerings, till Moses, finding the supply more than sufficient, caused proclamation to be made, that they might desist.—The work of the Tabernacle now went on with the greatest expedition. While the men were employed about the laborious and ornamental parts of it, the women spun and prepared linen for the hangings, and for the priests' garments.

As the people dwelt in tents, the Tabernacle, or House of the LORD, was of the same construction, that it might conveniently be taken down, in order to be removed from place to place. “ * The Tabernacle was in the form of an oblong square, thirty cubits in length, and ten in height and breadth; and it was divided into two parts, viz. the *Holy Place*, and the *Holy of Holies*. The *Holy Place* was twenty cubits long and ten wide; in this stood the golden candlestick, and the *Altar of Incense*. The *Holy of Holies*, which was also called the *Sanctuary*, was ten cubits long and ten broad: it contained the *Ark of the Covenant*, and was separated from the *Holy Place* by a veil or hanging made of rich embroidered linen, which hung upon four pillars of

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

Shittim or cedar wood, that were covered with plates of gold, but had their bases made of brass; and at the entrance of the Tabernacle, instead of a door, there was a veil of the same work, sustained by the like pillars, which separated it from the outward court.

“ The boards or planks, of which the body of the Tabernacle was formed, were in all forty-eight, each a cubit and a half wide, and ten cubits high; twenty of them went to make up each side of the Tabernacle, and at the west end of it were the other eight, which were all let into one another by tenons above and below, and compacted together by bars running from one end of it to the other; but the east end of it was open, and only covered with a rich curtain.

“ The roof of the Tabernacle was a square frame of planks, resting upon their bases; and over these were coverings or curtains of different kinds; of these the first in the inside was made of fine linen, curiously embroidered in various colours, of crimson and scarlet, purple and blue. The next was made of goat's hair, neatly woven together, and the last of sheep or badgers' skins (some dyed red, and others blue), which were to preserve the rich curtains from wet.

“ Round about the Tabernacle was a large oblong court, an hundred cubits long, and fifty broad, encompassed with pillars overlaid with silver, and whose capitals were of the same metal, but their bases were of brass. Ten of these pillars stood towards the west, six to the east, twenty to the north, and twenty to the south, at five cubits distance from each other; and over these hung curtains made of twined linen thread, in the manner of net-work, which surrounded the Tabernacle on all sides, except at the entrance of the court, which was twenty cubits wide, and sustained with four columns overlaid with plates of silver. These columns had their capitals and bases of brass, and stood at proportionable

tionable distances, and were covered with a curtain made of richer materials.

“ In this court, and opposite to the entrance of the Tabernacle, stood the *Altar of Burnt Offerings*, in the open air, that the fire, which was kept perpetually upon it, and the smoke arising from the victims that were burnt there, might not soil the Tabernacle. It was five cubits long, as much in width, and three cubits high, was placed upon a basis of stone-work, and covered both within and without with plates of brass.

“ At the four corners of this Altar, were four things like horns, covered with the same metal; and as the altar itself was hollow, and open both at the top and bottom, from these horns there hung a grate made of brass (fastened with four rings and four chains) on which the wood and the sacrifice were burnt, and as the ashes fell through, they were received below in a pan. At a very small distance from this altar, there stood, on the south side, a brazen vessel, which, on account of its extraordinary size, was called the *Brazen Sea*, in which the priests used to wash their feet, whenever they were to offer sacrifice, or to go into the Tabernacle.

“ In that part of the Tabernacle, which was called the *Holy Place*, there was, on the north side, a table made of Shittim wood, covered with gold, two cubits long, one in breadth, and one and a half in length: about the edge of it was an ornament or border made of gold, together with a crown of gold in the middle, and at each end was placed an offering of the *show bread*, viz. six loaves in a pile, to represent the twelve tribes. The bread was changed every day, and not allowed to be eaten by any but the priests.

“ Over against this table, on the south side, stood the candlestick, which was made of pure gold, upon a basis of the same metal, and had seven branches on each side, and
one

one in the middle. The branches were at equal distances, adorned with six flowers like lilies, with as many knobs like apples, and little bowls like half almond shells, placed alternately, and upon each of these branches there was a *golden lamp*, which was lighted every evening, and extinguished every morning.

“ Betwixt the table and the candlestick, was placed the *Altar of Incense*, which was but one cubit in length and breadth, and two cubits high; but it was covered with plates of brass, and had a crown of gold over it. Every morning and every evening, the priest in waiting for that week offered incense of a particular composition upon this altar, and to this end carried a smoking censer filled with fire, which he took from the altar of burnt offerings into the Tabernacle, and having placed it upon the other altar, retired.

“ The ARK was a kind of chest or coffer, made of Shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold within and without: it was two cubits and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and the same in height, and round the top of it was a crown of gold: it had rings of gold at each corner, and there were staves made of Shittim wood, covered over with gold, to put through them to bear it by.

“ On the top of the Ark was the mercy-seat, which served as a covering to it; and at each end of this was a *cherub*, with his face towards the other, their wings extended, so that they met and covered the mercy-seat*. In this was deposited the Tables of Testimony, and it was placed in the Holy of Holies.

“ Anciently every head of a family was a priest; but as the LORD had appointed a Tabernacle, or habitation of His

* The form of the Cherubim cannot from Scripture be exactly ascertained.

holiness, and would not allow the people to enter the place where He designed to display His glory, He thought proper to establish an order of priests, to be His immediate servants.

When Moses was on the Mount the first time, he received command from the LORD to separate Aaron and his sons for the Priests' office, and gave directions in respect to the habits they should wear, which were afterwards made. The dress of Aaron, as High Priest, was very magnificent. It consisted of the Ephod, with the breast-plate and girdle, the robe of the Ephod, the embroidered linen coat, and the mitre. These were all of linen, and covered the whole body from the neck to the heels; over these was a purple or blue tunick, which reached not so low, but was curiously wrought all over, and at the bottom of it were pomegranites and bells, at equal distances; the pomegranites were made of purple and crimson wool, and the bells of gold: the intent of the latter was to let the people know, by the sound of them, when the High Priest was going into the Sanctuary, and when he was coming out; and also to intimate to them, that he should not go without ceremony into the presence of GOD.

The Ephod was a kind of girdle, embroidered with gold thread, and other threads of divers colours, which, being brought from behind the neck over the two shoulders, was put across upon the stomach, and hung down as low as the feet. Upon that part of it which crossed the shoulders, were two large precious stones, on which were engraven the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, six on each stone; and where the Ephod crossed the breast, there was a square ornament called the breast-plate, wherein were set twelve precious stones, with the names of the twelve tribes engraven on them, on each stone one. In the breast-plate was
the

the URIM and THUMMIM, or the ORACLE OF GOD, by which the Divine Will on particular occasions was made known. The girdle of the Ephod was embroidered like the rest, and fastened it close to the waist.

The Mitre was of fine linen; it covered the head, and on the forehead was a plate of gold, on which was engraven, HOLINESS TO THE LORD; this plate was also called the *Holy Crown*. The mitre was tied behind with two ribbons fastened to its ends.

The other priests had only a simple tunick, a linen mitre or bonnet, and a girdle, &c.

There were a great variety of utensils for the Tabernacle service, such as censers, basons, spoons, &c. made of gold or brass.

It is impossible for us to know *all* that was meant by the institutions under the Mosaic dispensation; but we may collect, from several parts of the New Testament, that they were designed as *types* or representations of various particulars under the Christian dispensation; and also as pledges of the blessings that GOD's faithful people should in a future state enjoy in heaven.

We have before observed, that Moses was the Mediator between the LORD and the people: his mediation after the establishment of the priesthood, seems to have related chiefly to their *temporal* affairs. In respect to *spiritual* concerns, the High Priest was the *Mediator*, who was to make atonement and intercession for them; and his dress indicated the nature and efficacy of his office: its magnificence implied the dignity of that Great Being, whose minister he was.

The literal meaning of the words URIM and THUMMIM, are said to be *light* and *perfection*; or *the shining* and *the perfect*. There are various conjectures concerning the URIM and THUMMIM; but as the Scriptures are silent, it is impossible

possible to come at any certainty on this head: all we know is, that the Breast-plate contained within it something which was the appointed method of making known the Divine will on solemn occasions.

The inscription on the golden plate, which was on the front of the mitre, signified, that the people were not to adore the High Priest; but to ascribe *holiness* to the LORD only. The common priests were assistants to the High Priest.

In about six months, the whole work of the Tabernacle, and all its appendages, were compleated. The whole amount of the gold that the people offered, was about 159,000l.; in silver, about 34,000l. of our money; exclusive of 6600lb. of brass.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

